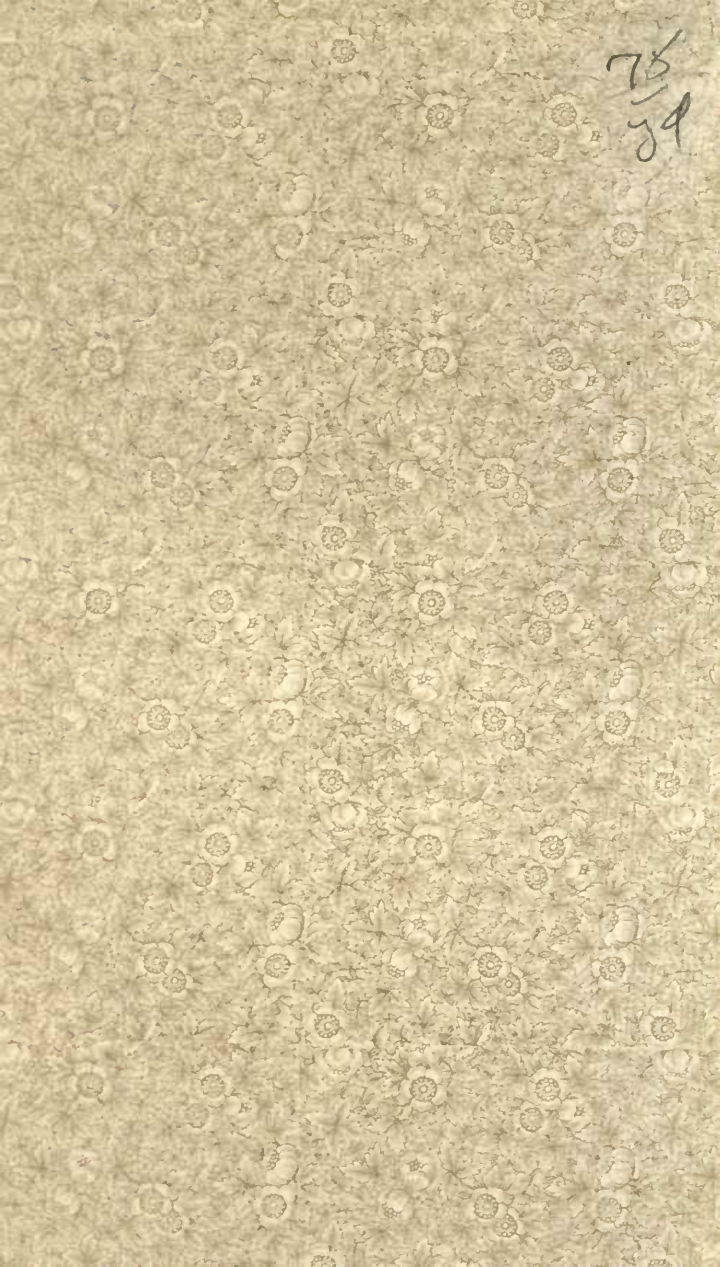
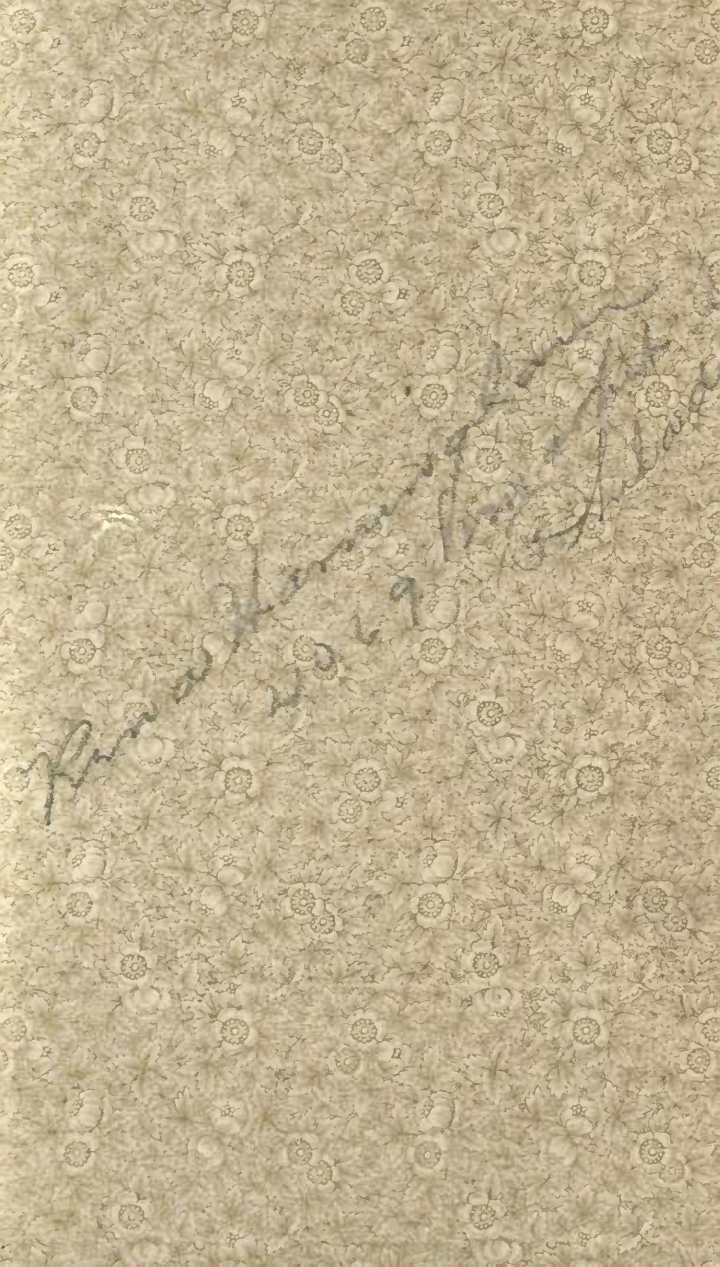


THE FATAL
SECRET



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Engraved by John Sartain, Phil^a

Ida Glenwood

THE BLIND BARD OF MICHIGAN

THE

FATAL SECRET

BY

IDA GLENWOOD,

"THE BLIND BARD OF MICHIGAN."

[GORTON, MRS Cynthia M. R.]

"Thoughtless of beauty,
She was Beauty's self."

PHILADELPHIA:

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TO

REV. CHAUNCEY HALL AND WIFE,

WHO WERE FOR TWENTY YEARS TEACHERS IN THE MISSION SCHOOL ON
THE ISLAND OF MACKINAW, AND FROM WHOM, BY THE RELATION
OF DETAILS CONNECTED WITH THAT EVENTFUL PERIOD OF THEIR HISTORY, THE
INCIDENTS OF THIS STORY
WERE GATHERED,

Is the Book most Lovingly Dedicated

BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE

The nearly twenty years the writer of the following pages has been shut out from all the bright beams which nature gladdens the earth and invests the soul, excluded from all that please the vision and lift to exultation as well as the night in the darkness the glittering hours of pleasure that were scattered about her.

Known to my thought-entrained chamber, a faint light and illumined the heavy fall which the external gloom had shadowed from my heart was drawn aside and a way was found to the midnight darkness. "I will bring

the joy such as thy soul may know, not the smile of the world, but the reward that is given to the true.

In poverty, unaided, wandering back over the years, I know that my heart conceded upon the mountain side, and on the sandy plains, or winding along upon the hills, I was seeking all or discarded into the sea and left to the waves the living waters bubbled and the light was scattered on and smiled as the very language

And all along through the storming years of the past

PREFACE.

FOR nearly twenty years the writer of the following pages has been shut out from all the bright beauties with which Nature gladdens the soul and invigorates the mind, excluded from all that pleases the vision, and left to gather, as well as she might in the darkness, the glittering baubles of pleasure that were scattered about her.

Alone in my thickly-curtained chamber, a faint light came gleaming, the heavy pall which the external gloom had shadowed upon my heart was drawn aside, and a sweet voice was heard in the midnight darkness: "I will bring thee joys such as thy noonday knew not, and smiles of peaceful satisfaction shall reward thee for the labor of love." Then memory, unguided, wandered back, o'er the grass-grown path that lay half concealed upon the mountain side, and on the sandy plains, or wound along upon the bank of some yawning gulf, or descended into the cool and silent valley, where the alluring waters bubbled and the fragile forget-me-not looked up and smiled, as the weary footsteps hurried by.

And all along through the slumbering years of the past the pitying angel faltered not, but gathered with ceaseless

hand from the broken hedges, from the brier and the wild wood, and often from the grassy lea or beside the gurgling fountains, some tiny flower or bright green leaf upon which the foot of Time had not trampled, and laid them as precious trophies at my feet. Fancy came, and with cheerful fingers twined them into a wreath of poesy, whose fragrance filled the desolate chambers of my heart and let in the glorious sunshine that flooded the world outside.

One cold, cheerless wintry day Memory returned and knocked timidly at the closed door of my darkened chamber.

"The flowers have withered and the bright green leaves faded, from their exposure to the light of the present," she whispered, "and my feet have grown weary from a fruitless search for others, fresh and fair, with which to fill their places."

"Will not the praises of friends, the pitying smile of the generous *connoisseur*, restore them?" I eagerly asked.

But the sickening odors from the withering flowers died away, and the sunshine faded from the inner chamber where it had lingered, and again through the unbroken darkness came the sound of the sweet sad voice, as it whispered, "No."

"Go, then," I hurriedly bade; "step aside from the well-beaten path in which my footsteps have been hitherto traced. Gather up the scattered threads of romance which lie plentifully strewn throughout the shady groves, where the merry birds once sang, and by the dark turbid river where the restless spirits of imagery delight to ramble when the floods are high and the angry waves chant a dismal dirge over departed day. Go! I would weave these together in one

broad, fascinating web of lights and shadows, blend the sombre hues of woe with the purple and gold of every heart's history, and with this would I festoon my lonely prison-house, and its fadeless colors shall cheer its desolation until the echoes of this beating heart shall slumber beneath it, and a hand shall write upon the portal, 'Gone, gone!'"

My mandate was obeyed; and to you, gentle reader, I offer the results of my labors.

It may be, that my work will not please you, and the critic's eye may perceive that the characters here presented have been sent forth in a most unbecoming *déshabillé*—perhaps even partially destitute of those decorations and embellishments which are usually so desirable to true literary merit. If such an impression rest upon the mind of any one, let me beg him to enter his garden at midnight, when the stars are asleep and the pale moon is closely curtained in her ethereal bed, and as he wanders with slow, unsteady step over its pebbly walks, let him pluck from the right and the left the many-colored flowers of rich and of sombre hue that are shedding around his path their soothing fragrance; with all the taste and skill which he possesses, let him twine them together in a wreath for his lady's brow. When the morn approaches, see if a smile is not upon her lip, and merriment dancing in her eye, as she laughingly inquires, "Where was your artistic skill when you joined the yellow and the carmine, the purple and the amaranth, in fond embrace?" Is the darkness your plea? It is mine also. She smiles, and kisses the bright japonica that was plucked for her, removes the half-blown rose to a place upon her bosom, while the tender bud nestles in her bright golden

hair, and in a crystal vase places the token of your love, that it may not wither unappreciated. If a similar kindly fate be in store for these pages—if from them a few cherished thoughts may be gathered to cheer a lonely hour or to drive from a single brow the frown of discontent, leading one from beneath the cloud to a brighter and more peaceful spot, where the rays of a gentle, unflinching trust in Him who is a Father to the fatherless, and a friend that never forsakes—then will the shadows that have fallen thickly about the Author, and led her hitherward for an anticipated light with which to gild the passing hours, not have fallen in vain.

IDA GLENWOOD.

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THE FATAL SECRET.

CHAPTER I.

THE MORNING WALK.

IT was a lovely morning in June, one of those quiet, tranquil mornings that woo fond memories from their slumberous shades to a silent communion with the inmost thoughts. The birds sang sweetly, and the zephyrs sported leisurely with the soft young leaves; but they were listened to only in far-off days when the bright anticipations of the fresh heart kept time with the warblers' merry songs and the dance of the morning breeze.

Lieutenant Edgerton was seated in the cool shade, his calm blue eyes intently fixed upon the listless expanse of waters before him. The sun had not yet left his eastern bed, and shadows lingered in the green wood and rested all along the shores of the lake. The young man heeded not the cheerful carol of the birds that were warbling their morning songs, so occupied was he in listening to the sweet music that came in plaintive strains from memory's bower, up through the majestic sweep of the past, and filled the secret chambers of his soul with thrilling melody. But discordant fingers had touched the silver strings, and the color deepened upon his flushed cheeks, and his clear eyes sparkled with an unwonted brilliance.

"Ned, as I live!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet, as he heard a footstep near him. "What has possessed the power to draw you forth at this early hour?"

"On my way, sir, to the mission house to ask prayers

for our lost lieutenant, supposed to have been spirited away in the silent watches of the night, as the poet has it. But as I have had the good luck to stumble upon him, I will go no farther," he said, bowing obsequiously; and with a merry laugh the two seated themselves upon the beach.

"I am glad you have come," continued the lieutenant, after a moment's pause, "for my thoughts were twisting themselves into rather an uncomfortable snarl. Ned, pass that little pine stick over to me, will you? I begin to believe, with you, there is soothing music in falling chips whittled by one's own hand, for my dull English ear seems to hear its feeble strains. I wonder I had not thought of it before. No doubt it would have driven away these spectral forms of the past, before they had so disturbed me."

"You astonish me, Charles," replied his companion; "you, whom every one supposes to be the happiest fellow alive, telling of spectral visions and troubled thoughts. I can never believe it. Surely your digestion must have become impaired, while idle fancies have armed themselves with horrors and passed in review through your midnight dreams. I only wish my early history was as pleasingly glowing as I fully believe yours to have been."

His companion smiled, but made no reply. After a few moment's silence, the lieutenant threw down his knife and stick, and taking a letter from his pocket, bearing numerous postmarks and seals, opened it:

"Listen, Ned; I will read you an extract which, no doubt, has been the cause of my dyspeptic symptoms:

"Tears are falling fast from my weary, watching eyes, as I commence this letter to my heart's best treasure, far, far away. I am growing prematurely old and feeble. Five long years of patient waiting and painful anxieties have bowed my erect form and scattered silver threads among these dark locks.

"How much longer must your mother wait for her truant boy? I had fondly hoped that your residence at West Point would have satisfied your desire for absence

from home. I have eagerly waited for your return. But your last letter tells me that you have strayed still farther away, and new fears for your safety have been added to my already overpowering store. Lady Eveline is very anxious about you. I could but show her your letter, in which you did not mention her name. What could it mean?"

Here the young man paused, and refolding the letter, returned it to his pocket.

"I have read enough of that, Ned. You see, Lady Edgerton is very anxious to see her son, while that same naughty son is not, as yet, ready to gratify his affectionate mother. Bad case, isn't it, my good fellow? But where there is no remedy, it must be endured. Isn't it so, Ned?"

Edward Herbert raised his dark eyes languidly to his companion's face:

"I will tell you what, lieutenant: could I receive such a letter from my mother, Uncle Sam's chains, strong as they are, would not possess the power to hold me in this detested spot one hour. Do you see that? It is a tear, and I am not ashamed of it, although I did not suppose such a liquid drop of feeling could be wrung from my heart. But there it is; and the name of 'mother,' as it sounded once more through the long-closed chambers of affection, summoned it forth. My mother knows not where I am, nor shall she ever know, until one great object of my life is accomplished. But pardon me," he continued, rising and taking the hand of his companion; "I see that I have astonished you in return. The drum is calling the stragglers in. Let us go."

While the two are walking arm in arm back to the fort, we will take a look for one moment around the island.

Mackinaw—or Michilimackinack, as it was once called—is situated in the straits which connect Lake Huron with Lake Michigan. Its original name signifies "great turtle," which, in its singular conformation, it not a little resembles. Its circumference is about seven miles, through nearly the whole of which the island rises precipitously

from the waters of the lake to the height of a hundred or a hundred and fifty feet, composed principally of rocks and sandy soil, while the irregular banks are mostly covered with small but luxuriant shrubs and trees.

At the time our story opens, there were very few inhabitants on the island, and those mostly fur-traders, who came every season to make purchases of the Indians, who flocked thither from the various quarters in which the aggressive steps of the white man had suffered them to find a temporary lodgment. The latter bartered their winter stores of skins for worthless but gaudy trifles, or much oftener for the accursed "fire-water," of which they were particularly fond. Thousands were frequently there congregated, dotting the shore with their wigwams, and making night hideous with their wild music and dancing.

On the summit of this little island, which, from its elevation, could be seen at a great distance by those approaching it, stood the fort, toward which we left Herbert and Edgerton retracing their steps. On one side of the island is a crescent-shaped indentation of the coast, which forms the harbor, while near it, close upon the banks, on an elevated point, stands the mission house, in which some sixty little boys and girls had been gathered together from their wild savage homes, and fed and clothed by the American and Foreign Missionary Society, under the supervision of the kind and self-sacrificing servants of Him who bade them "Go preach my gospel to every creature." Well did the work of civilization and regeneration prosper in their hands. Many will there be in the last day "to rise up and call them blessed."

A rude chapel stood near the mission house, in which the word of God was faithfully preached every Sabbath to a motley group collected from various localities.

What a picture this little island would have presented to a casual observer! But who can gauge the mighty influences that have been scattered over the whole world from that little isolated spot of earth upon the waters?

CHAPTER II.

THE ISLAND BEAUTY.

CHARLES EDGARTON, at present holding the rank of lieutenant in the United States army, was known among his companions as "the happy young Englishman." He rarely alluded to his previous life or history; and when he did, nothing was said which would induce any one to suppose that he had ever been more than they then beheld him—a merry-hearted yet studious aspirant after military distinction. The frequent letters, however, written by him, bearing the address "Lady Anna Edgarton, Edgarton Hall," had excited a peculiar kind of respect and regard for him in the minds of his comrades.

"That is most conclusive proof to me," remarked a friend to him, one day, entering his room and carelessly pointing to a letter lying on the table upon which the ink was scarcely dry, "that you are either a nobleman's son in disguise, or a scion of some illustrious house reduced, by a change of fortune, to a search for pleasure away from home."

Edgarton smiled as he remarked, in a studiously indifferent manner,

"A point fully proven needs no further argument, I believe. But lest the disguise in which you seek to envelop me should create a suspicion of my loyalty, I will satisfy your curiosity in a measure. It is true the restless longing for change brought me here. What special motive impelled me, it is needless to my present purpose to mention. But my oath of allegiance to America and liberty was as truthfully taken as though my first breath had not been drawn upon English soil. Some day, my good fellow," he continued, clapping his hand familiarly upon the shoulder of

his friend, "you may hear more of your mysterious acquaintance. Until then, pray do not grow suspicious of me because my letters chance to bear such an imposing superscription."

"Suspicious!" exclaimed his friend, joining in with Edgerton's merry humor. "You mistake me. A slight tremor of reverence ran over me and moved my rattling Yankee tongue to utter expressions which seem to you—and perhaps truthfully—to indicate curiosity on my part; it is all over now."

Edgerton, apparently not noticing the last remark, continued:

"It is true, I can hardly convince myself with good reasoning in regard to my present position. A mere boyish whim, I take it to be, yet I rather enjoy it. You see our English tactics were not quite satisfactory to one of my peculiar military proclivities. That must be all, I apprehend. But I love your country with purely filial devotion, and I should even be proud to aid, if need be, in maintaining its present lofty eminence in the eyes of all nations, my own country not at all excepted."

Thus dismissing the subject, he had little occasion for alluding to it again.

The Sabbath came.

"Do you visit the chapel to-day?" asked Herbert of Edgerton, soon after the morning meal was over, as they strolled leisurely out into the bright, bracing sunshine, and looked down toward the narrow bay, whose waters were dotted with the heavy boats of the traders and the Indians gay canoes.

"Well, yes," replied Edgerton, hesitatingly; "I think I will. These Sunday hours prove rather tedious when one has nothing to do or to think about. Besides, to tell the truth, Herbert, I'd just like to see that beautiful wild-flower I heard you expressing yourself so warmly about, only a day or two since. I suppose one needs pay nothing for so

magnificent a sight, eh? A beauty, shining forth in this gloomy, uncivilized spot of heathendom, must be a luxury altogether unlooked for, and I shall be happy--most happy--sir, to accompany you and feed my starved vision once more with delicious sweets."

"I had quite forgotten that the island beauty had been sick, and that you had not seen her," remarked Herbert, as the laugh of his friend died away. "But that she is a beauty, you will be free to admit when once you have seen her. My advice is, barricade your heart if you do not wish it lost in the general smash; for half the soldiers in the fort have lost theirs, poor fellows! and sigh hopelessly because such is the fact."

"Yourself included, I suppose! Well, none are so capable of portraying the ease and bliss of drowning, as those who have tried it. I'll risk my susceptible heart, however, among a score of these tawny maids. I have no particular relish for that kind of dainties."

At the appointed hour the two friends descended the well-beaten path which led to the chapel, which stood upon the bank of the water. It was a strangely blended group that presented itself to the eyes of the haughty young Englishman, as he stood before the open door and looked in upon it. On the right was a large representation from the fort in their military dress, with their muskets reclining beside them, while just in the rear sat a goodly number of the inhabitants of the island, men, women and children, in their holiday garb, varying in style to suit the tastes and circumstances of the wearer. Opposite, and commencing near the desk of the speaker, sat the teachers of the mission school, surrounded by nearly threescore of swarthy little faces and forms in their half-civilized dresses, looking very contented and happy as they patiently waited for their "great teacher" to talk to them. At a distance back, a few fathers and mothers were sitting in their native dress, looking rather uncomfortable in their strange position, yet evi-

dently smothering the fire of their savage natures to hear a little more of the "Great Spirit" of whom their children had heard so much.

At first Edgarton felt inclined to laugh at what he considered the ludicrous spectacle before him, but the voice of deep supplication broke upon his ear and filled the place with a holy solemnity which imperceptibly pervaded the heart of the listener with reverence and awe. Then there arose upon the surrounding stillness the song of thanksgiving, and many little voices that had early learned the war-whoop and the savage cry were attuned to the sweet melody of praise.

What a conquest was this! What a sight! Over it angels might rejoice and the heart of man give thanks. Edgarton could but feel all this, as he seated himself in that lowly house of God, and listened to the morning song as it was wafted upward on the soft warm breath of that beautiful spring day.

A few moments more, and Edgarton's eyes looked for an object they had not yet beheld. "A beautiful squaw would be a rare sight to gaze upon," he mentally repeated to himself; "I really hope I may not be disappointed."

He was not. When the singing was ended and the little warblers were reseated, he espied for the first time a girl of about fourteen summers, sitting by the side of the pastor's wife and affectionately holding her hand. Her large, dark, dreamy eyes, so full of tenderness and love as they rested upon the speaker, had lost all of their ancestral fire, beaming forth as they did calmly and quietly their new light of peace and love. Her long black hair hung in glossy ringlets around her head, and fell gracefully about her shoulders. Yes, she was beautiful. Her complexion, to be sure, could not be mistaken; yet how ruddily and freely the roses bloomed upon her cheeks and tipped her lips with their delicate blush! It was no wonder she was called the "wild-flower of Mackinaw." Like a rose blooming in a barren

waste, did she appear to the wondering eyes of Edgarton as he gazed upon her.

"Provoking!" he exclaimed to himself just as the text—which, by the way, he failed to hear—was read from the desk—"really provoking that so much symmetry and grace should be enveloped in coarse plain calico, and fitted so tightly about the throat too. Queer taste these *Christian* ladies have, to be sure." His reverie was here interrupted by a hand laid carelessly upon his own; and turning, he beheld the merry, laughing eye of Herbert fixed upon him.

"How did you like the sermon?" inquired Herbert, on their way back to the fort.

"Very well," replied Edgarton; "not quite equal to our English clergy, but will do."

"The text was a strange one," again suggested the first speaker, "wasn't it?"

"Let me see. I have quite forgotten it."

"Or rather you didn't hear it," replied Herbert, with a laugh. "Come, now, tell us your opinion of the island beauty, for I saw your starved vision feeding long, and with apparent good relish, upon her pretty face."

Edgarton laughed.

"I hope I did not attract attention by my rude gazing," he replied, seemingly annoyed by his friend's raillery.

"Oh no; I presume no one noticed you but myself, and I was watching for it. You think she bears her title well?"

"Most gloriously; she is, in fact, a perfect model of beauty. Yet, strange as it may seem to you, my heart continues to discharge its proper functions in quite a healthy, normal manner. But one thing strikes me," he continued, "as rather peculiar. I was not before aware that nature ever adorned her wild children of the woods with such a superfluity of curls."

"Her father, you remember, was a French trader—a Canadian, I believe," answered Herbert as the two separated, and Edgarton proceeded to his room.

CHAPTER III.

HERBERT'S SAD STORY.

"**H**OW now, my poor fellow?" said Edgerton, entering the room of Herbert, one pleasant evening, and finding its occupant pacing the floor with rapid strides; "what has happened to you? Something truly terrible must have crossed your path, so to agitate you. Calm yourself, and confide in me. It will do you good; sympathy takes away half the burden."

"Your theory is good in the abstract, Edgerton," said Herbert, pausing suddenly before his friend, and looking wildly at him, "but it will do me no good."

"You have not tried me," Edgerton pleaded. "I do not ask your confidence from idle curiosity, but with a wish to be of service to you. Will you not give it to me?"

"I will," Herbert replied, at last, with great emotion; "I will tell you all. But you must bear with me if I prove tedious, for, in revealing the cause of my present emotion, I must go back link by link in its chain of events, tracing each carefully. Can you endure the penalty?"

Edgerton conducted his friend to a seat by the open window. It was a lovely evening. A halo of golden light left by the departed sun still lingered upon the mountain's crest. The gentle breeze came dancing in, laden with the evening minstrelsy of happy birds and the distant music of the surging waves, and played wantonly with the soft brown curls of the young Englishman, while its grateful breath fanned the brow of his excited companion.

Both were silent for a few moments, gazing out upon the stillness of the twilight hour, when Herbert quietly said:

“How such an evening as this carries me back to my childhood’s home!—that holy spot of earth where memory’s soul loves to linger. In a pleasant little village, in one of our Eastern States, the home of my early childhood still stands, embowered in roses which fond hands have twined about it. There was my only sister born, the idol of my boyhood’s days, my sweet guiding angel when temptation assailed me. My poor, poor sister!” Pausing a moment to wipe away the falling tears, he continued: “Oh how I loved that sister! The first kiss I ever imprinted upon her little velvet cheek riveted a bond that death itself cannot unloose, and warmly did she return my affection. Then came the mirthful school-days, when I was her constant companion. No boyish sports were sufficient to draw me from her side, unless, as it not unfrequently happened, Willie, the son of our village pastor, or his sister Nettie, had her in particular charge. Willie was about my age, and as amiable and gentle as the lovely Nettie; and as our homes stood side by side, all our joys were shared together. Those were indeed happy days, but they could not always last. The spring must develop into changeful summer, then into the mature autumn, and at last we must encounter the frosts of stormy winter. I was nineteen, and four years my sister’s senior, when a shadow, dark and gloomy, settled down upon our quiet home, casting a sombre pall upon our future. My father was no more; his chair was vacant at the family board; his voice was hushed at the consecrated family altar. My feeble mother almost sank beneath the heavy blow. I must act! must step forth upon life a *man*. Well for me had I maintained the dignity of such a position. But how shall I proceed?—how look again at the dark picture to which I would for ever close my eyes?”

Edgerton was about to speak, when Herbert interrupted him: “I know what you would say, but I must tell you all. I had been for three years in my father’s store, and had taken much pains to fit myself for bookkeeping. In such

capacity I entered a store in a city a few miles distant. In this establishment was a clerk of about my own age; affable and engaging in his manners, he soon won my confidence and affection. In a few weeks I left the quiet boarding-house which my mother had selected for me, and located myself with my new friend in a more pretentious establishment, where greater freedom was at my command.

“‘Ned,’ he said to me one evening as we were walking in the street, ‘I have an old friend in here to whom I believe I have never introduced you. Let us drop in for a moment.’ The place appeared to be a very respectable saloon, notwithstanding the glittering glass which dazzled the eye upon entering, and my new acquaintance proved to be a very entertaining young man. An hour passed rapidly away, and we arose to take our leave.

“‘We have some new port, gentlemen,’ said an acquaintance; ‘will you not try a glass? We call it very fine.’ The decanter was handed down, the glasses filled, one passed to me. ‘Your health, Ned,’ said my companion, raising his to his lips. ‘I never take anything of the kind,’ I answered, pushing the glass from me. Both indulged in a loud derisive laugh. ‘A little green,’ suggested my companion to his friend; then turning to me, he said, ‘Drink it, Ned; you don’t know how good it is. It will do no one any harm. You will soon get over those puritanical notions of yours if you stay here,’ he continued, slapping me upon the shoulder.

“His prophecies only proved too true. In a few months I had stepped from the elementary principles of wine-bibbing into the more extensive sphere of brandy-tipping. At first I returned every Saturday night to the dear ones at home, but my visits soon became less frequent. I noticed a dimness in my mother’s eyes as she gazed upon me, and I could not bear the tender words of admonition and warning I there received. ‘Oh, my brother,’ often whispered a gentle voice at parting, ‘do nothing in that wicked city

which you know our angel father would disapprove, or that will ever wring bitter tears from our dear mother's heart.' Then came the loving kiss that always aroused my better nature, which for two or three days would refuse to be hushed to slumbering repose. My companion, Fred Hunter, saw this, and suggested plans to keep me away from this home influence.

"'I *must* go home!' I said, positively, upon one occasion, as he was endeavoring to dissuade me—'I must certainly go, or Anna will weep her dear eyes out; it is her birthday and she writes me that she has a pleasant surprise for me, and that I must not disappoint her.'

"'Then why not ask me to go with you? It is insufferably dull when you are away; your mother and sister will not take it amiss, I am sure.'

"So it was arranged, and that evening another was added to our little circle. The hours passed pleasantly away. I thought that Anna never appeared so lovely before. She was attired in a plain dress of white, with a wreath of myrtle and rose buds encircling her brow and nestling among her flowing curls. This was, she told me, Nettie's work.

"'Anna,' said I, late in the evening, drawing her aside from the entertaining voice of our visitor, upon which she had for a long time hung, 'you have not revealed that pleasant surprise which you have in store for me. I am growing impatient.'

"'To-morrow will do,' she answered, while a deep blush suffused her beautiful face. 'It is only a letter; I will put it in your room for you to dream over,' she whispered a moment after.

"A change had evidently passed over her; a shadow seemed flitting across those sunny smiles which the winning words of our guest were calling forth. I was proud of my sister, and bad as I was, I could not look upon the scene before me without a pang—a regret that I had placed her under the influence of his dangerous fascinations.

“According to her promise, a letter lay upon my table that night. It was from my early friend Willie, Nettie’s darling brother. He was in college, preparing himself for his future vocation. My heart throbbed with a wild delight as I read the words of his ardent love, in which he couched his petition for her hand. ‘How happy she must be!’ thought I as I folded the letter. ‘How happy we might all be, were I worthy the hand of his sister! But no; she could not love me if she knew all, and I would never deceive her.’

“Well would it have been if the vows and resolutions made that night, as I tossed sleeplessly upon my bed, had been remembered and unbroken.

“I need not tell you of all the little acts and cunning devices used by the subtle foe to steal away the pure heart of my idol sister. I had introduced the serpent into our little paradise, and slowly but surely he wound his deadly folds around its cherished one, and breathed poison into her listening ear. She had loved the noble, the gentle student, and would have given herself to him, but Fred Hunter had stepped in between her and the humble disciple of Him who is meek and lowly, and all unsuspectingly she had been dazzled by the greater light.

“Shall I tell you *more*? In less than two years from the night he entered our peaceful home, my sister had sunk to an early grave, ruined and broken-hearted. And as if this was not enough, by her side he slept who had chosen her for his heart’s idol. When he saw her fall, he sank beside her, and they repose together. Was I not her destroyer? Did he not first pollute the purity of my soul, and thereby effect his fiendish design? Oh, my poor mother! I knew she must blame her son, and I could not endure the sight of the ruin which I had wrought. I fled! In a fit of despair I enlisted in the army, and here I am to-night, after six long years of bitter separation.

“But the strangest part remains to be told. That villain—

my sister's murderer, the destroyer of my hopes, the cruel fiend that has broken my widowed mother's heart—sleeps under this roof, contaminates the air I breathe with his foul breath! Can I long survive in such an atmosphere? I did not know him until he whispered his name into my ear to-night. Do you—can you wonder that I am as you find me? Rather, do you not wonder that I am not altogether, and wholly, a maniac?"

Edgarton tried to reply, but could not speak.

"Now you know all, my friend. I see by the pale moonlight that you pity me. I thank you for your patience in listening to my sad story, and will trouble you no further. Good-night!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SUDDEN SURPRISE.

ON a low, shadowy point of the island, near the foot of Lovers' Rock, where the tall pines mingled their plaintive sighs all day together, sat Edgarton and Herbert, looking out upon the sleeping waters of the lake. It was a winsome afternoon, and all nature seemed hushed into a pleasing reverie. The golden sunbeams enjoyed their mystic dance upon the waters with uninterrupted glee, for the zephyrs had all retired to cool and silent shades, and thither the friends had wandered to enjoy their refreshing influences.

"You cannot, however, deny to me," said Herbert, taking up the thread of their interrupted conversation, "that I am most uncomfortably situated. Who can foretell the consequences if that fiend continues to hiss through his polluting lips into my ears those fondly cherished names, now dearer than ever to my heart?—those names, too, which his demoniac vileness has already clothed with infamy and shame? His very breath, mingling with the air I breathe, seems to kindle a Tartarean fire within me!"

Who, while gazing into his flaming eye and seeing the dreadful hatred burning there, could doubt it? His companion certainly could not. Yet he replied, calmly,

"Herbert, you have my heartfelt sympathy; for were I in your place, I feel sure that I should not be more of a moral philosopher than yourself, and I cannot preach to you upon the nature of patience and submission. All the advice I can give you is to obtain a leave of absence for as long a time as possible, and to quit this place speedily, trusting to the future for some agreeable change."

'I appreciate your kindness, Edgarton, although my mind cannot for a single moment entertain your well-meant advice. Why should I deprive myself of the society of the only true and sympathizing friend whom I have known for years, and make myself a lonely wanderer, aimless and objectless, unless it be to run away from present disquietude merely to plunge myself into deeper and more interminable despondency? Had I a mother and a Lady Eveline, like yourself, grieving at my absence and affectionately pleading for my return, it would be quite a different affair. No, I must remain where I am, and trust to the overshadowing influence of an angel sister's love and a Christian mother's prayers to protect me from the great temptation that rises up before me in all the strength and power of an unshorn Samson.'

"Herbert, how do you know that your mother is not still living, and even now pleading with tears that her heavenly Father may spare her sinking form until she shall once more see her only and beloved child?"

"Edgarton, my dear friend, spare me; you know not the agony which your words awaken within me. Oh that I could believe that she yet lives! But a spectral fear continually haunts me, and I ever hear the awful words, *You are her murderer!* No, she does not live. That frail nature could not have borne up under the repeated blows of bereavement and sorrow. But even if she does live, I know not where to go to find her. On my way to this place I accidentally learned that my uncle had left Boston and removed to a distant city, taking his widowed sister with him, and that she was very ill, and not expected to recover. That sister was my angelic mother. I could not learn to what city they had gone, and therefore should despair of finding her. Oh, my dear mother!" he exclaimed with great emotion, rising from his seat, "what would I not give for one forgiving word from your lips? But a single solacing recourse is left me in one short year I leave this island,

and return to the scenes of my boyhood days and the graves of those my heart still calls its own."

Edgarton was about to reply, when a gentle splash on the water close by them attracted their attention; and looking up, they beheld a tiny bark canoe gliding toward the shore, in the centre of which, like a beautiful naiad fresh from her wild-wood home stood the sylph-like form of the bewitching Indian maid, "the wild-rose of Mackinaw." In her hand she held a tiny oar, from which the glittering drops fell in chasing succession back into the scarcely rippled water, while her fairy bark seemed to follow as under mesmeric influence the direction of her dark, enchanting eyes which seemed resting as if spellbound upon the craggy rocks just behind where they were sitting.

"Am I awake?" Edgarton whispered, in a low undertone, rubbing his eyes. But the question remained unanswered, for the beautiful girl, springing from her boat, stood before them, blushing with unfeigned surprise.

"I did not see you," she said, with embarrassment. "I came here to gather those flowers upon the rocks yonder;" and she was about darting away, when Edgarton exclaimed, "Stop a moment, fairy! You certainly do not think of risking your life to procure those stunted wild-flowers, not half so beautiful as yourself? But if you must have them, allow me to gather them for you."

A low, merry laugh was the only reply he received, and away she bounded, graceful and fleet as a startled fawn, skipping from one projecting rock to another, higher and still higher, hanging one moment apparently suspended from some slender twig, then on, until, reaching the lofty eminence, she exultingly held out to the breathless spectators her coveted treasures. In a moment more she stood beside them.

"The white man's foot is too heavy," she said, with a merry twinkle in her laughing eyes, "to gather these pretty flowers, which always grow high up in the sunshine."

"What do you propose doing with them?" asked Edgerton, looking intently into her bright face. "You surely ought to divide them with me for wishing to serve you."

"I gather them for my teacher," she replied, modestly; "she is so very fond of them."

"But I am fond of them too. Will you not give me that little half-blown violet? See, those ugly thorns are spoiling it," he said, taking it from her hand.

"Yes. You may keep it, if you like;" and before he had time to reply, she had leaped into her light canoe and was rapidly gliding away.

"She is certainly the most beautiful creature I ever beheld," he said, after she had vanished. "Her face and form are perfect, and all her movements most bewitchingly graceful."

"Yes," said Herbert, "she is indeed Nature's loveliest child. May God preserve her from the contamination of the destroying fiend."

"Amen!" ejaculated Edgerton; and the two walked slowly away.

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CHAPTER V.

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT.

MANY weeks had passed, and summer had come and decked the little island with more than its wonted loveliness. Flowers with variegated hues peeped out from among their bright green leaves all along the rugged banks, or looked down from each steep declivity with the most bewitching gravity. The stately trees, and even the crooked and closely intertwining branches of the irritating under-wood, were clad in a robe of seemingly more than earthly beauty.

Oh how I love the summer! Even now as I write my soul seems lifted above the chilling vesture of snow and ice that nature has so closely wrapped about her, and in dreamy stillness do I listen to her myriad voices, speaking to us through the singing birds, the noisy, babbling brooks and the rustling of the sensitive leaves, among which the wanton winds for a moment disport themselves, then dance away to join the elfin troop, dallying with the meek-eyed flowers. How the sweeping of their perfumed pinions, fanning to blissful life the sweetest memories which we will not let die, carries us back to many a bright and sunny spot along life's dusty road where no cloud casts its shadow upon us! But the music ceases. The secret chambers of communion with the joyous past are closed, and the thick curtain of a stern reality shuts out again reveling sunbeams and sweet sounds. For clouds will move across the summer sky, and weird-like winds move around the most cherished resting-places of our thoughts.

Somewhat thus mused Edgerton as he strolled in one of

his restless moods along the path which many feet had worn close to the water's edge, and for a while again he was walking through the magnificent grounds that surrounded his childhood's home. How well he remembered the little summer-house halfway down the garden walk in which at sunset he had so often sat and wondered—oh how he had wondered!—about that far-off land of which his father had talked so much, that western land, the home of the oppressed, the asylum for the weak and outcast of all nations! How his young heart would throb with wild excitement, and his cheeks glow with a deeper crimson as he would gaze into his mother's troubled face and exclaim, with childish enthusiasm, "When I am a man, I shall visit America; my feet shall stand upon that rock on which the exiles once stood; thence will I wander over the New World's battle-fields and study the records of their illustrious dead, whose noble deeds and self-sacrificing lives helped to rear a temple naught beside

'Can vie in beauty with—a structure grand,
A watch-tower o'er that dearly-purchased land;'

and from its most lofty summits shall these eyes look forth over that boasted model world, the 'cradle of American Liberty.' Then came in thought that mother's parting words, 'Let not your stay be long, my son; but wherever you wander and whatever associations you may form, remember that the purest English blood flows in your veins, and that the name of Edgerton has never been lowered from that height upon which the worth and prowess of your noble ancestors placed it. I expect much of you as the only heir of your father's name and his high position among the nobles of his native land. Be true to his memory, and do not forget that it was one of his last expressed wishes concerning you that the fortunes and families of Pemberton Castle and Edgerton Hall should be united in yourself and the Lady Eveline. She has always been taught to look upon you as

her future husband, and is much grieved at your anticipated absence. Remember, then, that two hearts wait anxiously and impatiently for your return."

"Pshaw!" and Edgarton bit his lips with evident vexation. Just then a shadow fell upon his path.

"What were you thinking of?" said a sweet, ringing voice beside him; "you looked so angry about the mouth that I dared not meet you, so I stood still and waited for you."

"I am not looking angry now, am I, fairy?"

"No, not now, but you were."

"Well, sit down here with me a few moments, and I will ask you about your sick mother."

"She is no better," answered the girl, sorrowfully; "and what is worse, she will not let me talk to her of the 'white man's God,' as she calls him, and tells me that I am not her child, but that I belong to the hated palefaces. Oh, she talks so strangely! it makes me shudder when I hear her;" and she turned her head and wept freely.

"Would to God her wild ravings were truth!" mentally ejaculated Edgarton as he gently raised the drooping head and asked, "Will they take her to the mission house?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

"Then do not weep; everything will be done for her that mortals can do, and God will not fail to reward you for the efforts you have made in her behalf."

Tears that gush up from the young heart are soon dried and leave no trace behind, as the noonday sun drinks the pearly raindrops that fall from the passing summer cloud. When Edgarton asked for the pretty flowers she held in her hand, she replied, "You are always begging for my flowers, when you know I gather them for my dear teacher; she loves them more than you do. Besides," she said, with an arch smile, "you can gather them for yourself."

"Only one, just one, to place with this lovely crushed violet you gave me many weeks ago. Do you remember it?"

A look of surprise passed over the face before him as her large dark eyes looked earnestly into his.

"Let me see," she said, after a moment's pause: "I have only seven little half-blown roses, and you want one of them. Very well, I will give you this just to make the number an even one;" and she passed him a tiny bud.

"Thank you, fairy; your selection could not have pleased me better."

Again she looked surprised. "It is not so pretty as either of the others," she replied, blushing deeply. "I will exchange with you if you wish it."

"Not for all the rest would I give this little bud in my possession. It has a language, fairy, which you will some day know. I will not tell you now; but if you like to please me, when I ask you for flowers give me another rosebud."

"But I must go," she exclaimed, suddenly rising to her feet; "my dear teacher would not take my little gift if she knew I had been sitting here talking with you. Oh, I do wrong to disobey her; but somehow you do not seem wicked, and I think, if she knew you as well as I do, she would think so too."

Edgarton took her hand as she passed him, and detained her for a moment.

"No, fairy, there is no wickedness in my heart toward you—nothing but good. But do not refuse to talk with me, when we meet casually, as on this occasion, or I will leave the island and go to my distant home."

Was this a casual meeting? For more than three weeks Edgarton had met the little fairy, as he chose to call her, almost daily somewhere along this quiet path, as she was slowly returning from a visit to her sick mother, while the twilight shadows were settling down upon the waters and clustering darkly in the green wood. She was rarely alone at this silent hour; but he never failed to catch at least one truant glance from her beautiful eyes, which served to gild his passing hours with the halo of peaceful joy.

But to-morrow the sick "Wohema" was to be removed from her wigwam to a room in the mission house, and Edgerton walked back to the fort in a very uncomfortable state of mind. When should he meet her again? Did he stop to inquire why this beautiful girl had become so necessary to his present enjoyment? Ah no! He would have blushed with shame had his truly English heart whispered the word "love" in connection with this remarkable child of a savage and almost extinct people. Had the question ever presented itself, he would have silenced its unpleasant suggestions by the soothing illusion it could be only the pleasing fascination which a lonely wanderer upon a dreary, sandy waste might be expected to enjoy, when suddenly before his strained vision a green oasis appears, decked with **one solitary flower, blooming in the most luxuriant beauty**

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRAGIC SCENE.

“**H**ARK! A musket-shot at this hour!” Then the mingling of confused voices: “What can it mean?”

And Edgarton hurried from his room, down the narrow passage to the open court, thence across to a small enclosure, or outer room, where he knew that many of the soldiers and under officers were at this time engaged in cleaning and re-loading their muskets, preparatory to the general review, which was to take place that afternoon. As he approached, an oppressed stillness seemed to be settling down upon the place, and resting, with heavy weight, upon his heart. Why did his calm face assume a pallid hue, and his hand tremble with nervous emotion as he reached it forth to open the door? An overpowering dread of some dire calamity had taken possession of him. He could not shake it off. He started back in impulsive trepidation, but the sound of hurrying footsteps again aroused him; and checking his agitation with a determined effort, he entered the apartment.

What a scene was before him! Close by the door, where he was standing, was a group of excited faces, bending over the lifeless form of a human being, lying upon the ground in their midst. Edgarton did not distinguish the face of the murdered man, as, raising his eyes, they rested upon the statue-like form of Edward Herbert leaning composedly upon his discharged musket. This was enough. The entire tragedy was at once unraveled, like a dark picture, before him.

“Where, now, is the gentle influence of that angel sister’s love? Where the soothing power of a Christian mother’s

prayers? Had they for many lonely years been quietly thrown about him, drawing him aside from many a lurking snare, and with their magic power snapping asunder the galling chains of early indiscretions? Would that angel form now wrap the silvery sheen of her ethereal love about her and leave him for ever?" Edgarton stood transfixed to the spot, overpowered by such reflections, and his gaze riveted upon the pallid, expressionless face of the erect statue before him.

The eyes of Herbert were slowly raised toward his friend, and for a brief moment soul communed with soul, mingling together the heart's true sympathy and love, creating that strong bond of affection which is indissoluble by the opinions of the world around, or the cold hand of prejudice. Edgarton could perceive no signs of remorse or regret in the unflinching gaze of those dark orbs which searched the depths of his own troubled heart; they only put forth a silent petition to him for a continuation of that pity which had so often been proffered him.

"This is a very sad affair," said Col. Ray, approaching Edgarton—"very sad, and one, too, that I can't at all understand. Herbert has so long been in our regiment, and who, after knowing him so intimately, could believe that such a spirit of evil could have dwelt beneath that mild, engaging exterior?"

"Col. Ray," said Edgarton, warmly, "far be it from me to uphold the perpetration of a broken law, but in my opinion circumstances often serve to palliate offences equal in magnitude to the present. A fiend without may, by his own machinations and cruel power, so arouse the slumbering demon which his ire has created and implanted in the bosom of another that it will turn again and rend him."

"It may be so," replied the colonel, "but the law admits of no such palliation."

Herbert was now slowly approaching, walking arm in

arm with a couple of guards, and as he drew near, the eyes of the friends again met. Edgarton could not repress the inclination which impelled him to extend his hand to the criminal. The latter convulsively grasped it, and a fervent "God bless you!" fell on his ear as the three passed out.

A few moments' silence ensued, when Edgarton inquired.

"What are your orders concerning the unfortunate young man?"

"That he be imprisoned here, under strong guard, until we can deliver him to the territorial authorities."

What a deep gloom now pervaded the fort, as if the dusky wings of death were overspreading it, casting chill, damp shadows upon every face! yet not one of them all endured such anguish, such a keen sorrow and sympathy for an erring brother, as did Edgarton when he had returned to his own room and with tearful eyes recalled in detail the sad story he had heard from Herbert's lips a few short months before, and remembered the painful agony he had witnessed as the healing wound was reopened, and day by day was lacerated afresh by the same cruel hand which had inflicted it, until the heart could bear no longer, and the suppressed passions burst their controlling fetters, and the tortured one stood forth before the world, a murderer. No, no; he checked the thought the instant it was entertained. The purple stain of a man's blood was indeed upon the hands of Herbert, but the foul mark could not be stamped upon that ingenuous heart.

A long time he mused, until, no longer able to bear the agony of his torturing thoughts, he hastened into the open air to seek composure from pensive communion with nature. All day long did he strive to summon resolution to visit his friend.

"What shall I say to him, or how offer consolation to a heart so troubled as his?" Questions such as these constantly pressed themselves upon him. "Yet to-morrow—perhaps this very night—he will be hurried away, and

confined in a gloomy prison-cell. What days and weeks of wretched loneliness await him! What an age of agony and suspense will be concentrated in a few short weeks! Yes," he resolved at length, "I must see him, and pledge him anew my unfaltering friendship and aid, in this his hour of trial."

He had reached the outer door and was mechanically entering, when a gentle hand clasped his own; and looking up, he beheld Father Hawes, the mission pastor, standing before him. Sorrow was written upon his usually placid face, and the hand's close pressure told that love and sympathy were wrestling together in his Christian heart, ready to come forth as ministering angels, bearing the oil of peace and the balm of consolation.

"You are on your way to visit the unhappy Herbert?" said Edgarton, inquiringly.

"I am."

"You will be very gentle to my dear friend? His crime is indeed great, but who of us all can say he should not have fallen beneath such a weight of provocation?"

"Let us thank God," said the good man, fervently, "that he has not subjected us to such heavy trial."

That night the two friends sat long together, and conversed for the last time amid the scenes of so many pleasant associations. Herbert was still very pale, but strangely calm and almost cheerful.

"This will be the termination of my crooked path," he remarked, as they were about to part. "Even now I behold the end, enveloped as it is in the dense darkness of foreboding gloom;" and for the first time his lips quivered with emotion. "Yes, it is dreadful. No doubt everybody is shocked at my inhumanity, but none can be more so than myself. Edgarton, my dear, my only, friend, shall I tell you that though I can behold nothing but ignominy and death before me, yet not one ray of repentance for my rash act comes to lift the sombre curtain which for ever ex-

cludes hope from my soul? No, I cannot! I never can repent!"

"Herbert, do not speak so sadly; I can see a bright star whose cheerful light is even now penetrating that dark cloud. There must be joys yet in store for you."

Then came the mournful "good-night," and Herbert was once more alone. Early the next morning he was conducted to a boat that had reached the island about daybreak, and borne rapidly away.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISCLOSURE.

FOR nearly a week Edgarton confined himself to the fort, endeavoring to dissipate his thoughts by the performance of as many duties as his ingenuity could devise.

"Strange things happen in this life, that's a fact," said Joe Price to his companion as they stood together one afternoon polishing the barrels of their muskets. "I remember that our minister used to say so when I was a little boy and sat close to mother in that high-backed old pew, amusing myself meanwhile with pilfering fennel and caraway seed from her capacious pocket. But when the parson added, with some solemn admonition, 'We know not what a day may bring forth,' I used to make faces at him behind my Sunday hat. Yet after all he knew more than I gave him credit for. Who would have supposed one week ago that Smith and Herbert would be where they are to-day? Poor Ned! I wish he were back. It has been as dull and gloomy as a funeral ever since they carried him off. As for that rascally Smith, I don't know. Some fellows, though, get no more than they deserve."

"What do you know about it, you stupid Yankee?" interrogated his companion, tartly. "You are always sticking your guesses and beliefs into everybody's business, about which you know nothing. For my part, I believe Smith was a fine fellow, and no more deserving death than that simpering Herbert."

"Oh, ho! who has been sticking in a belief now, when he knew nothing about the matter? I tell you, my friend, Yankee eyes, as you call them, can see a devil as far off as anybody, and I saw the hoof of a cloven foot in the corner

of that Smith's optic before he had been here a week; and then, when he would come up to Herbert with the Satan all snugly covered up with that smile of his, and bow so graciously, as much as to say, 'Your servant, sir,' and then whisper something which would take all the color out of Herbert's face, I wondered he did not strike him, and only wished he had asked me to do it for him; but he didn't, and only once did I hear him speak, and then so plaintively, while his dark eyes seemed burning up with an inner fire, which Smith's words must have kindled, as he exclaimed, 'For my sake, for your own sake, don't drive me mad.' But our general says he must swing for it, just to show us, I suppose, how we should look in such an elevated position, and also to impress the mind of the savage foe with the beauties of our civilization."

"'Pon my word, Joe, you are getting eloquent."

Edgerton, not caring to hear more of the conversation, was turning away, when a note was placed in his hand by a soldier, which contained a request from the mission pastor that he would explain to him that afternoon as much of Herbert's history as he felt inclined to communicate. He gladly availed himself of the opportunity, and when evening was coming on set out for the pastor's rooms. The bright blue sky was unclouded, and fading purple and gold still lingered on the mountain tops. Before him lay the sleeping waters of the lake, and for the first time for many months he thought with regret of the wide ocean that was rolling restlessly between him and his home.

"Fool that I am," he murmured, "to isolate myself thus from home and friends merely to gratify a boyish whim and satisfy a vain ambition! What can I possibly gain here, in this little spot of earth which nature has broken off from the world and thrown away upon the waters in this far-off corner? Nothing."

Arriving at the mission house, he was ushered into the general sitting-room, where the two gentlemen were seated

in conversation with their wives. All rose to greet him as he entered, and it was not until they were reseated that he saw the beautiful Indian maid, Flora, as she was called by her mission friends, sitting close by the side of her teachers, engaged in some kind of needlework.

"Ah! here is my little fairy," he said, stepping forward and taking the hand of the blushing girl in his own. "I did not perceive you before."

For a moment their eyes met. Had the little dark-eyed girl been a child of the world, nurtured into precociousness by the hot-bed influence of society, she might have read much in those calm, quiet eyes that were gazing so intently down into the depths of her own.

"I always prophesy some good to myself," he remarked to the gentlemen, "when this little fairy crosses my path during my daily walk."

"She is a very good little girl," remarked the teacher, quietly.

A few commonplace inquiries ensued, when Mr. Hawes suggested a withdrawal to his private study.

"Not unless you prefer it," said Edgarton. "There are none here whom I would wish to exclude from the sympathy which the story of my friend's wrongs cannot fail to excite."

No eye was free from tears as the narrative proceeded; and when at length he described the final scene and rehearsed the farewell words of the prisoner, "I cannot! I never can repent," the good pastor clasped his hands, raised them slowly, as if in fervent supplication, and exclaimed, "God forgive me! I cannot censure him—no, not even blame him. The kind-hearted Father knows how to pity, how to forgive."

We said no eye was undimmed with tears. There were none, however, in the dark, brilliant orbs of the Indian girl as she sat looking intently into the face of her "great teacher." Her work lay upon her lap, her hands were

tightly clasped, while burning indignation was expressed in every feature of her beautiful face.

All were engaged in silent communion with their own thoughts, when an inner door was suddenly thrown open, and Miss McFarland, an assistant teacher, appeared, pale with excitement. "Oh, come!" she said, in great agitation; "she certainly is dying. Come!"

All instantly arose, with the exception of Flora, and were hastening from the room, when Mr. Ferry stopped, and extending his hand to Edgerton, said, "Perhaps you would not like to await our return. Poor old Wohema is dying, and you must excuse our abrupt departure." A gentle pressure of the hand, a fervent "good-night," and he left the room.

"Why do you not go?" inquired Edgerton as he tenderly raised the drooping head of the trembling girl, that was lying upon the vacant chair beside her.

"Oh, I cannot see her die," she exclaimed, in a paroxysm of tears—"I cannot see her die; and then she does not love me, and talks so wickedly when she sees me that they tell me I must keep out of her sight, because it excites her so much;" and again the head drooped low, and her whole frame shook with emotion.

"Your mother not love you?" softly whispered Edgerton, his hand resting upon the jetty curls. "Impossible! Beautiful, artless child, my heart tells me how easily it could love one like you, if it were possible to find her in another sphere of existence." He raised again the drooping head from its resting-place, looked for a moment into the dark, swimming eyes, then rose, bidding her good-night, and left the house.

Nearly an hour afterward the pastor's wife quietly entered the room where the weeping girl was lying, and taking one of her cold hands, said, gently, "All is over, my child—the frantic voice is hushed, the weary body is at rest! Would you like to see her before our evening devotion?"

"Oh no, not to-night," she answered, shudderingly—"not to-night."

It was a full, round, silvery moon that shed its peaceful light down upon the tranquil waters, hushing the great world to sleep as a watchful mother soothes her restless child. Flora felt its tranquilizing influence, as she knelt by the open window and looked up into the shining orb that beamed from its dizzy heights upon her. She remembered that when she was a little child, she thought the moon was the face of the "Great Spirit," that was often turned away because of the wickedness of her people, but unwilling to leave them in darkness, would turn again and look upon them. Then, when she was sad, she looked for pity into its large bright face; and she never looked in vain.

To-night the fancies of early childhood returned to her, and she sought consolation in its quiet beams, repeating, with clasped hands, the prayer of former days: "Great Spirit, take care of the poor little Indian girl!"

CHAPTER VIII.

CONDEMNED TO DIE.

AUTUMN came at last, with her crimson garments redolent with the breath of dying flowers, while the leafless trees chanted a solemn dirge over the grave of departed summer. One by one the leaves had fallen silently upon the earth, spreading over her faded form a variegated carpet for the footsteps of approaching winter.

Thus die our joys away, and over their faded forms we throw an amaranthine shroud of beauty, on which we rear new hopes and new aspirations. As we turn to look again the whole mass floats away down the ever-flowing stream of time, and we stand upon its desolate banks wrapped about with the mantle of discontent, dreading the battle with the rough, cold winds of a stormy winter. And yet the ear rightly attuned hears an inspiring voice wafted from the vanishing wreck: "He shall be like a tree planted by the river of waters."

Herbert listened, as he sat in his lonely cell, seeing the dark, turbid waters swallow up the last fragment of his shattered hopes, yet he heard not that cheering voice. The clamor of a broken law and the cries of insatiate justice alone filled his ear.

The trial, which had been so impatiently looked forward to by so many anxious hearts, had taken place, and Herbert was condemned to die. He stood by the small grated window of his narrow cell, striving to catch a single glimpse of the setting sun, whose faintly glimmering rays yet lingered upon the bars.

"Ah!" he murmured, "how soon the sun of my existence

will set in eternal night! Dark and cloudy has been the day, but a deeper than midnight gloom awaits me. Flowers of my spring-time joys, where are you? Withered—gone! yet not all! Nettie, my dove-eyed Nettie, lives; but she shall never know the fate of him she once so fully trusted. Perhaps even now she has forgotten her unworthy lover. If so, no words of mine shall awake slumbering memories. I will die unknown, as for six years I have lived, and the public may gloat over the name of Edward Herbert."

The massive key grated harshly in the rusted lock, the bolt slid back, and Herbert, wiping a tear from his pale cheek, turned to welcome the island missionary. Unwavering had been the attentions of this kind friend, and words of peace and consolation had fallen refreshingly from his lips as dew-drops upon a withered flower.

"You are late to-night," Herbert said, clasping the extended hand.

"Yes, but not less welcome, am I?"

"Always welcome to the lone prisoner," he answered as they seated themselves on the rude, hard couch. "My dear friend, do not talk to me to-night of repentance. Anything but that. Could you see as I do the high, impassable wall which lies between me and this peaceful requisite for salvation, you would feel as I do how impossible it is for me to scale it."

From the heart of the good man one supplicating plea ascended to the throne of mercy, and the request of the condemned was heeded. Often had he led the bowed form close to that fountain whose waters alone could heal the malady of his soul, but as often he turned away, murmuring, "Not for me, not for me."

Thus the winter passed away. Spring came, and Herbert was sent back to the island to undergo a new trial and await the decision. There, where his great crime was committed, he must probably pay with his life the forfeit demanded. Sorrowing hearts awaited him, but kind words

and cheerful smiles greeted him as once again he entered the little harbor, and accompanied by the clanking of heavy fetters walked up the well-remembered path to the fort.

It was a peaceful day, and the soft southerly wind came up from the waters of the broad lake with cooling languor, calming the hot, troubled brow and giving new life and strength to feeble, reanimating nature. Herbert saw and felt it all—the tranquil azure sky, the reflecting blue waters that surrounded him, the bright green mantle quietly spreading itself over the little island, then the bland air that toyed so lovingly with his matted locks, lifting them soothingly from his temples—such air as might have been wafted from orange groves in distant climes, restless, ever restless, as his own troubled spirit.

Then his thoughts went wandering back to other days, and fairy forms flitted past him. Suddenly he stopped. His downcast eyes espied a lonely violet struggling in bloom hard by his path, and in a low voice he requested that it should be given to him. Edgerton placed it in his hand. A slight flush overspread his wan features as he felt the humble flower in his burning palm. He pressed it passionately to his lips. A tear trembled one moment upon his long dark lashes, then dropped heavily upon the tiny, tender flower.

Who shall say that flowers are not connecting links in the golden chain that still draws the clay-wrapped soul, wandering up and down over the dreary waste of life, to those brighter, holier joys whence it sprang? Precious gifts! I never hold in my hand a half-blown rose, and look down into its unfolding leaves, but I seem to see angelic eyes beaming their holy light upon me. Ah, how dreary, how cold and uninviting, this material world would be without this largess of a Father's tender love!

CHAPTER IX.

NOT YET.

EDGARTON was sitting in a shady nook upon the rugged, mossy cliff that overhung the waters of the harbor, his head leaning listlessly upon his hand and his whole manner betokening the deepest dejection. A dainty foot rustled the dry leaves near him, and a little brown hand was laid caressingly upon his shoulder.

"Ah, my fairy!" he said, without raising his eyes.

"How did you know it was I?" she asked, laughingly. "You did not see me."

"But I felt you. Don't you think I know the touch of this little hand? But come, sit down here by me. I am sad and lonely; perhaps you can cheer me."

"I saw the cloud upon your brow. Will you tell me what brought it there?"

"Do you see how low the sun is sinking? Before its golden rays shall have left this quiet spot to-morrow, Herbert, my friend, will have been thrust from this beautiful world into the dark unknown."

"No, not dark," said the girl, cheerfully. "God is there. It is light where God is."

"Ah! who can tell us of the hidden future—the mysteries which lie concealed behind the curtain of time?" he said, musingly; and then, as if fearful of the influence which his words might have upon his eager listener, he added. "True, fairy, God is there; and if he wanted my friend, he would call him, would he not? Ah, he is too good, too noble, to meet such a doom!"

"You loved him very dearly?"

"Very dearly; and I am not the only one. He has a

mother whose aged eyes no doubt have grown dim with weeping and watching for her only son, and who would sink into the grave with a broken heart should she ever learn his fate. But this is not all. There awaits him in a distant home a blue-eyed maiden with golden curls, but a shadow rests upon the thoughtful brow, robbing her cheek of bloom and taking the vigor from her young life. Poor, poor Nettie! she will grow weary, very weary, waiting for him she will nevermore behold!"

The tearful eyes of the listener were fixed with a wondering, pitying expression upon the face of the speaker as he uttered these words; but when he ceased, and his head once more sank dejectedly upon his hand, her eyes wandered with a wild, unsteady gaze over the waters until they rested in their deep thoughtfulness upon the far distant blue of the cloudless sky, down which the sun was gradually sinking to his nightly rest. At last she aroused herself, and turning once more to her companion, asked, mournfully,

"Can't you save him?"

"No; I have tried, but the governor refuses to interfere in the matter, and he alone has the power."

"The governor? Oh, I remember him. He visited our island last summer, and placed his hand upon my head when he was leaving, just as you do; you always make me think of him. He looked so kind and smiled so pleasantly as he told me to love my teacher and be a good little girl, and perhaps I would be a fine lady some day. I am sure he is not wicked."

Edgarton smiled as he looked into the beaming face and saw the color deepen upon her cheek as she repeated these fondly treasured words that had found their way and lodged in the little beating heart like some fond prophetic dream.

She broke the momentary silence that ensued with a whispered "good-bye," and darted away. He turned quickly to detain her, but like a fleet gazelle she bounded down the steep descent, and was speedily out of sight.

That night, as the moon commenced her stately march through the heavens, illuminating the darkness of the midnight hours, a slender boat shot out from the shadows which encircled the harbor, and with the speed of a bird flew out over the open waters. It was freighted only with two forms as swiftly, silently, it sped away.

The morning for the execution arrived. Herbert was seated upon his bed, his whole frame shaking and quivering with emotion, his head bowed, and his hands tightly clasped. As the kind clergyman entered and laid his hand gently upon him, a groan of inexpressible grief broke from his lips.

“My dear, dear Herbert, what is it that so disturbs you? Can it be that your approaching death unnerves you, and that, as you stand upon the brink of the fearful precipice and gaze into the depths below, you shudder and start back unwilling to take the final leap alone? Oh, then, believe me there is One willing to be your guide through the dense gloom, and to lead you safely to the light of his eternal glory. Believe it, Herbert; he loves you, and waits only for your willingness to crown you his for ever.”

An arm was placed lovingly about the neck of the trembling man, and again he pleaded with him:

“I love you, Herbert, as my own brother; and could the sacrifice of my right hand or my right eye save your life, I would not hesitate a moment to make it. But oh, your soul! What would I not give to save your soul? And do you not believe the precious Saviour, who gave his life for his enemies, is equally willing to save you? Oh, try him, try him!”

Tears were falling fast through the clenched icy fingers of the prisoner, and the good man, kneeling at his feet, poured out his soul in an earnest, supplicating appeal to Him whose ear is ever open to the cry of his children.

“Thank you,” said Herbert as the faithful minister once more sat beside him; “I am calmed now, and can tell you why the cold waters of that river rolling at my feet

make me shrink and tremble with apparent fear. Last night I slept. In dream I stood upon the verge of that ever-boisterous, surging stream whose maddened billows are ever plunging and foaming in mighty combat, while the thundering tones of an echoing voice continually reverberated from shore to shore these words of dismay: 'The wrath of an eternal God shall devour his adversaries.' A narrow bridge, thin and vapory as the morning mist, spanned the ever-devouring abyss, and on this frail structure my feet were about to tread. I looked. Many stepped on before me. A few passed joyfully over, and a strain of celestial music was wafted back as each new voice joined in the acclaim of the blood-washed throng. But, alas! more there were that fell into the yawning depths beneath. Some stepped resolutely upon the bridge of clouds, and immediately plunged from sight. Others passed almost to the other side, but were lost. Trembling I stood, not daring to advance, when a form arose before me. 'Dost thou wonder at what thine eyes behold?' it sweetly asked. 'Know, then, that few there be who ever enter into eternal life, because of unbelief. Confess thy sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and this bridge shall become firm as adamant under your feet, for the holy One of Israel shall uphold thee. Look again,' it exclaimed, pointing to the depths below. I obeyed. The waves were changed to billows of unquenchable fire, and the same thunder tones sounded in my ears: 'The wrath of God endureth for ever.' Horror-stricken at what I saw and heard, with an agonizing scream I awoke." A shudder passed through the frame of the prisoner, and again his head drooped and tears fell fast through his quivering fingers.

"My dear friend," said the other, in faltering accents "examine your heart; is there not some cherished sin concealed there which will weigh you down? Oh, be wise; search its secret chambers for thy soul's sake."

For a moment the condemned man sat in deep thought,

then suddenly clasping the hand of his adviser, he exclaimed, fervently, "No, no, not if I fall into those ever-sweeping billows over which I shall soon attempt to cross! Can I sink my aged mother, if, indeed, she still lives, deeper into that overwhelming gulf of despair into which I have already been the means of plunging her? No, no; Edward Herbert is in the eyes of a scrutinizing public a foul murderer, and in a few hours vengeance will wipe out the stain of my transgression with my blood; but the mention of that name will send no poignant darts into bosoms already lacerated, filling up the work my hands have wrought with bitterness and woe. No, my kind and faithful friend, there is not a secret act of my whole life, not a word of my mouth or a thought of my heart, that I would not lay open before you, if by so doing I could dispel the agony of your soul which I see reflected in your countenance, but my name I can never reveal, even to you; for much as I love and reverence you, there are others whom I love more. To save them from the acutest anguish which can tear mortal hearts will I step upon that bridge of air with this one secret unrevealed."

He shuddered fearfully, and was silent. In vain were all his friend's pleadings and prayers. Herbert remained immovably firm in his resolution, though his persistence was calm and considerate.

It was noon. The dark clouds which all the morning had been collecting over the island now paused in their movements over the meridian sun, shutting out its cheering rays and casting a deeper gloom over the place where the tragedy was so soon to be completed.

"I cannot see him die," exclaimed Edgerton, as, looking through the window, he beheld the rude scaffold at the farther end of the yard, with its dangling rope swaying to and fro in the breeze—"I cannot, I will not, see him die. 'Faint-hearted soldier,' I know they will call me, and laugh and

jeer at my weakness; but I cannot. Other eyes may feast their fill at sight of the writhing form which justice suspends before their eager gaze, but mine shall turn away from the horrid spectacle."

"See," said he, as he stood some little time afterward talking with Col. Ray, pointing to the dark clouds which hung over them; "the very heavens are frowning upon us, and all nature seems troubled and excited. I wish this tragical scene were not to be enacted here. If it must be done, why could they not have kept him at Green Bay? I cannot agree with the sage dispenser of law and justice," he continued, ironically, "that the execution here, before these savages with whom we are surrounded, will do us any good. The island is covered to-day, and loaded canoes are still arriving. Herbert has been a long time with them, and has been a great favorite among them. I have seen indignation as well as grief upon every tawny countenance I have met this morning."

"I fear nothing from them," answered the colonel, coolly "but I would gladly have saved Herbert from this ignominious death had it been in my power. The last trial was a mere farce. A single intimation from the governor would have changed it all; I am sure of it. But it is all over now. Herbert's lease of life runs out at the expiration of the next half hour."

"So soon? But you do not need me, colonel, I cannot witness this scene."

"Just as you choose;" and the commanding officer turned slowly away.

Three o'clock came at last, and the rude gallows was nearly surrounded by the soldiery, while the muffled drum beat with measured solemnity to the sad, low music of a death dirge which the band was playing. The distant thunder seemed charged with echoes of dismal wailing, while the clouds sunk lower and lower, as if to shut in the closing struggle. Hark! a hush seems to pervade the very

atmosphere while the sound of clanking chains draws nearer and nearer.

Herbert walks with a firm step in the midst of the guard, followed by his faithful friend, the mission pastor. Slowly he ascends the rough steps, and stands beneath the swinging rope. All eyes are turned upon the tall, manly figure before them; their gaze is met with a kind, friendly salutation, and then the clear, ringing voice so familiar to every ear bids them a last farewell. The rope is adjusted about his neck, and the low, feeble words of prayer mingle with the thunder's low moan and the sighing of the cool, damp winds. In a moment more— Oh how the beating heart throbs and the soul grows faint as the drum continues its muffled sound and the prayer still goes upward!

Hark! A shriek—a shriek! What means that piercing cry? Nearer, nearer it comes; voices have caught the distantly uttered words, and on—on—on the wind's breath are borne the pleading accents: "Don't hang him—don't hang him!" and in a moment more the Indian girl comes bounding through the excited multitude, her dark curls flying in disorder about her face and her brilliant eyes flashing with their intense light, holding in her hand a sealed paper, which she hurriedly presents to the commanding officer. "Stay the execution!" he shouts as he unfolds the paper. "I hold in my hand an unlimited reprieve for Edward Herbert." His words were lost in one long, exulting shout that rent the air and drowned the mutterings of the approaching storm, while the death dirge was forgotten, and the drum beat a rapid accompaniment to the universal rejoicing.

Herbert, with unmoved features, the rope once more swaying to and fro above his head, stood and looked wonderingly on. What could it mean? His feet had well-nigh stepped upon that "bridge of clouds," who had called him back?

The shout at last died away, and there, at the feet of the

wondering Herbert lay the prostrate form of his spiritual friend and guide.

"Oh, it has killed him," he cried, bending over him; but his hands were fast, and he could offer him no assistance.

"He has only fainted," said the physician in attendance, holding his head, until two soldiers advanced and bore him away.

Herbert was led back to his cell before Edgerton, who had wandered far down along the beach, again entered the fort. The sound of boisterous shouting had reached his ear. Its startling incongruity with the solemnity of the occasion excited his amazement, and full of wonder and apprehension he had hurriedly retraced his steps. A soldier met him at the gate, exclaiming, "Herbert is safe for the present, at least."

"What do you mean?" inquired Edgerton, not at all comprehending the unexpected announcement.

"Why, the beautiful Wild-Flower has saved his life—been to the governor and obtained a reprieve when everybody else failed."

"God bless her!" said Edgerton, as he rushed forward and hastened to his friend's cell.

But where was the beautiful "Wild-Flower" all this time? Like an angel of mercy she had appeared among them, bearing in her hand the magic wand which had driven back the ghastly form of Death, that stood waiting to clasp in his bony arms the fleeting life of the victim, and as soon as her mission was ended she had as suddenly vanished from their sight.

Oh what joy filled her young heart as she found herself once more encircled in the arms of her dear teacher, who was attentively listening to her night's adventure. Had she not saved the life of Herbert, and filled his soul with gladness?

CHAPTER X.

OWAETA'S VOW.

THREE days subsequent to the events narrated in the last chapter, Edgarton was again seated in his accustomed place on the rocky eminence overlooking the harbor, and upon the bosom of the waters beneath him many light canoes differing in structure were quietly reposing. A few hours before, Herbert had stood upon that very spot and bidden him an affectionate farewell, before stepping into the boat that awaited him, in which he was taken, still fettered and guarded, back to the lonely prison which he had left but a short time before, when he came forth, as he thought, to die. Again he was to return to it, and patiently there await the further pleasure of the law concerning him.

“What a changing scene!” soliloquized Edgarton to himself, as he sat looking out upon the trackless waters over which he had seen Herbert disappear—“a dizzy whirl of passing events! I seem to have lost my identity in its bewildering mazes, and the end is not yet. Can I be dreaming? No, no; the sun is actually shining upon those humble dwellings at my feet, and the cool breeze from the lake is without doubt having fine sport with the bright green leaves above me.”

It was true that Edgarton was not dreaming, yet weird fancies seemed floating before him, and his mind was filled with strange emotions.

“I am young,” he continued soliloquizing, “and possess a fortune which, though moderate, is sufficient to carry out my wildest schemes. Why should I not do as I please with it?” Just then the coming of the Indian girl interrupted the current of his thoughts.

"I knew you would come, fairy. I was sure of it, and was waiting patiently for you."

"How did you know it? Because you saw me coming? But I only came to see if you were happy. The last time I saw you here, your face was dark with sorrow. But it is gone now;" and a smile lit up her beautiful features.

"Yes, it is gone, and your presence is the blessed sunshine which has dispelled it. Come here, and sit by me; I want to hear from your own lips the story of your strange and successful adventure. What put it into your little head to perform such a heroic deed?"

"The grief that made the white man's heart so heavy."

"Mine, fairy? Was it because I was sad you saved the life of my friend?"

"Yes; the poor Indian girl loves to see you happy."

"Then look at me, fairy; for you know not how happy your words have made me;" and he raised the little captive hand to his lips.

"My words?" she exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Yes, yours. But come, I am anxious to hear your night's adventure."

"Very well, you shall hear it. When I last sat here, upon this spot beside you, and watched the sun as it sank lower and lower, until it dipped its beaming face in the dark blue waters of the lake, and knew that before his next day's journey should be ended, your friend, and the friend of my people, would be forcibly driven to the spirit-land, I silently breathed a vow to departing day that night should bring no slumber to my eyelids until he was saved. As I left you, your call reached my ear, but my swift foot would not tarry, and quickly I flew to the tent where bold Wehegan delights to greet his Owaeta. He was sitting under the shade of his bark canoe, smoking his evening pipe. 'Brave Wehegan,' I asked, 'do you love Owaeta?' 'Ah! more than the swiftest and best of the Winnebagoes.' 'Then,' said I, 'when the pale new moon that shines so dimly above us shall have

reached the middle of the heavens in her course, meet me at the overhanging rock of the harbor with your swift canoe and tiny oar, that pierces the bosom of the deep with noiseless haste, and with the swiftness of the eagle's flight we will speed away. Owaeta has breathed a vow; will you help her to keep it?" "If she will breathe another to the lonely Wehegan," he answered. "Then come, I would save the noble white man's life; and if at this hour to-morrow he still lives, Wehegan shall hear the dark maiden's vow."

Edgarton started: "Flora, do you love the Indian warrior, the bold Wehegan?"

"He loves me," she answered, timidly. "I must sit in his wigwam, cook his venison, prepare his bed, and watch to welcome him when his feet are weary from the chase."

"Well," he said, after a pause, during which he had been gazing into her unchanging face, "you saw the governor. Was he kind to you?"

"Oh yes; but he would not listen to my request at first, and so I told him of the red men's vengeance—how they had vowed to spare none that should see the gentle Herbert die. I was kneeling before him. He bade me rise, then left me. A long time he was away, but finally returned. handed me a roll, and placing his hand kindly upon my head, bade me hasten, or I would be too late. The sun shone brightly upon the waters as we stepped again into the canoe which was to bear us back to the island. Brave Wehegan! His arm faltered not as his keen eye watched the great golden orb rise higher and higher, and the threatening clouds grow thicker and blacker as they gathered together, until their great shadows rested down upon us, and the thunder came rolling up from the distant lake. His unflinching gaze pierced the clouds and marked the progress of the fleeting hours by the sun's upward flight. More vigorously, more resolutely, he plied the oar, never relaxing his wearisome toil until the canoe sped into the harbor and darted high upon yonder beach. He saved

him—the brave Wehegan saved the life of the red man's friend—and not I, the poor, weak Indian girl."

"And for his services at this time you have promised to live in his lodge and be his forever?"

"Yes."

"Then listen to me, Flora. Herbert is not pardoned—only reprieved. The fickle governor may take it into his head at any time to fix another day for his execution, and only to lengthen out a little longer the brittle thread of a miserable existence you have given yourself to one whom you do not love, and sunk the heart you sought to raise from despondency deeper, deeper into sorrow."

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed, vehemently, turning her large, dark eyes full upon him. "Why should the heart of the paleface be sorrowful because the Indian girl seeks the lodge of the dark-browed warrior?"

"Tell me, beautiful, artless child," he said, drawing her gently toward him, "would not the days seem long and those bright eyes sometimes be dimmed with tears if I were away and you could meet me no more? So would my life be dull and lonely without my beautiful island fairy."

"The Indian girl has vowed," she answered, plaintively, rising, and looking steadily at him, "and her vow is never broken." So saying, she darted down the narrow pathway, and was soon out of sight.

"It shall be broken," he exclaimed, indignantly. "That beautiful girl, in whose veins blood as pure as mine is now coursing, shall not be thus sacrificed. Oh no; all my native power shall be put forth for the next three months to bring about my designs."

Thus soliloquizing, he wended his way to the mission house. He had of late been a frequent and welcome visitor at that place. His kind and gentle manners, his affectionate and sympathizing disposition, had been a sure passport to that little band of Christians who stood upon that

solitary island, like a lone beacon-light upon some dreary barren shore. The good pastor arose and extended his hand in friendly greeting as he entered, and soon they were engaged in earnest conversation concerning the thrilling events of the past few days. At last Edgerton remarked,

"I have a little plan in my mind which I would be glad to disclose to you for your approval, as I am desirous of taking no steps in such an important matter without first consulting one more experienced in good works than myself."

"If my opinion or advice will be of any service to you most cheerfully will I give it."

"It will be of so much importance that it will decide my future action in reference to the subject of which I shall speak. In about three months I shall leave this island, where memory will ever find many pleasing associations, and, after a brief tour in the Southern States, shall sail for my English home. My boyish thirst for romance and excitement has been nearly satisfied, and I long for quiet and repose. I have inherited a fortune more than sufficient for my limited wants, and it is in regard to the disposition of the surplus that I would consult you."

"I fear I shall prove but an incompetent adviser in money matters, for my experience in such affairs has been exceedingly limited," he replied, smiling.

"Wisdom, my dear sir, is not confined to the possessor of great wealth; and I doubt much if you would be willing to exchange the results of your labors in the Master's vineyard for abundant riches."

"No, no!" and a look of perfect satisfaction stole over the face of the worthy missionary, as his visitor continued:

"You have one pupil in whom I feel a very great interest. I would like, partly to satisfy a very justifiable curiosity and partly from a higher motive—the good she might effect among her people—to witness the power of a liberal

education and the influence of society upon a native child of the woods."

"Flora?" asked the missionary, in surprise.

"Yes, the beautiful, artless child whom you call Flora."

"We have ceased to look upon her as a child, she has been with us so long, and we have had an opportunity of witnessing yearly the developing of her moral and intellectual character. We think of her as past her childhood, forgetting that she cannot be more than fifteen. But before I can advise with you at all concerning your interest in her, I shall be obliged to consult my co-workers respecting it, and think and pray much over the matter. I would rejoice to see her become useful to her people, and think perhaps she can be as well prepared to be so here as elsewhere. They do not need the influences of a refined education in their present position, but the plain, practical truths of civilization and religion."

"Very true; but it seems to me that the higher you can elevate one of them, the more attractive will the beauties of these two great elements appear."

"It may be so. Have you said anything to Flora concerning this?"

"Not a word; I felt it my duty to consult you first."

"Thank you; it shall receive my careful attention. But where would you place her to be educated? Perhaps you have not thought of the difficulties which would be thrown in your way, should you attempt such an enterprise?"

"Pardon me, sir, but I have pondered it well. In a distant city is a large seminary for young ladies coming from all parts of the world, and near the school a distant relative of mine resides. In her family I would place her; and inheriting, as she does, a truly French character from her father, her lineage would not readily be imagined; and I think I could easily arrange this matter," he said, smilingly, as he arose to depart, "and shall wait impatiently for your views upon the subject."

"You shall have them soon, but I advise you, in the meantime, to review the whole plan carefully. There may be some points of difficulty that have escaped you."

"Truly," thought Edgerton, a few moments after, as he saw Flora standing upon the beach surrounded by several little swarthy faces that were all turned upward to her as he talked to them, "truly, she seems to me even, to have lost her childhood since that eventful night; yet how petite and graceful she appears, standing there with the lingering sunbeams playing all around her! No, no! by the glories of departing day, I swear it! She shall not marry the Indian warrior, Wehegan!"

CHAPTER XI.

LEFT TO HIS FATE.

OH how the days and weeks with busy feet trip away! As the ripples chase each other on the surface of the mountain stream, on, ceaselessly on, in their unresisting course, so hurriedly pass the precious hours, propelled by the ever approaching future, down the current of time. The past—whither has it fled? The future—where is it? Upon a narrow bridge, of but a moment's width we stand between these two great oceans of eternity, yet from this narrow standpoint we look back, and memory lights up the retreating years with many a gladsome recollection. Then forward to the future! Oh, what a halo of brightness "Hope" delights to spread over its shadowy uncertainties! To the youthful vision it is near, almost within its greedy grasp, but like the *ignis fatuus* it leads alluringly on over life's uneven path, until old age beholds it burning with a steady glow beyond the tomb, yet still beckoning, still alluring. Hope, sweet hope! oh, how it cheers us when the heart grows sick and weary, and is ready to lay down its burden by the dusty roadside, faint and weary! How it invites us on ever to renewed activity and exertion!

Edgerton did not falter in his resolution, although the time for his departure was nigh at hand, and the consummation of his wishes seemed farther than ever from him. Anxiously had he sought an interview with the Indian girl, yet the three months had nearly passed away, and he had failed to obtain it. Why did she so studiously avoid him? She came no more to their rocky trysting-place, nor did she walk alone by the water's edge, where they had so often

met and together listened to the soft, low complaint of the murmuring waves. But he had often seen her in his repeated visits at the mission-house, and her large dark eyes had met his with a lustre as brilliant as aforesometimes.

It was a hot, sultry morning in midsummer that Edgerton emerged from the fort to enjoy the cool, fragrant breeze that came up from the distant lake, herald of approaching day. How oppressively calm and serene was the dewy face of nature at this early hour! The sun had not yet risen above the eastern hills to chase away the night shadows which lingered in the vale. Silence walked upon the waters, hushing their fitful complaints, and waved her silvery wand over the little island slumbering silently upon its bosom.

Edgerton wandered on, sad and restless. That day he was to pay a farewell visit to the unhappy Herbert, of whose final fate he was perhaps for ever to remain in ignorance. Nor was this all. In a little more than a week many farewells must be spoken and the future of others must be left undecided, and their destinies be long, if not forever, unknown. One face, one figure, arose prominently in the mist of uncertainty.

"Why should I care for the Indian girl? Why make myself unhappy because she presumes to choose the path in which she prefers to walk? Speak, O my heart!" he exclaimed, seating himself upon the root of an overhanging tree. "Speak! What dost thou expect from the tawny maid of the forest? Hush! dare not lisp it! Educate her and claim her for thine own? Absurd! I'll break this paltry cord, and stand forth a man. Yes, clothed in my right mind. Ha, ha! I must have been dreaming! But thanks to my better judgment I am now awake—fully awake!"

Alas! O man, how transient the purposes formed in the morning wakings! Turn thy face to the wall, and then wisdom may not disturb thee. "A little more sleep, a little more slumber," and under the delusive smile of

beauty thy dream will return again. See, the sun is rising, and the dark shadows retreat before its scintillating rays; even thus, Edgarton, shall thy firm resolve flee away before the enchanting rays from beauty's eyes.

He wandered on, and once more stood by the door of the mission house. There was life here, for the sound of voices reached his ear. He was about to make his presence known by a slight tap upon the door, when it suddenly opened from within, and in an instant his beautiful fairy stood before him. A faint shriek of surprise escaped her lips as she attempted to dart past him, but his strong arm encircled her waist as he exclaimed,

"No, no, fairy; not so fast. I cannot let you go until you tell me why you will not see me any more, nor talk to me, as you used to do."

A footstep was heard approaching the door, and Edgarton clasped her to his heart as she whispered,

"Wehegan hates the paleface;" and with one unutterable look of pity and affection, she struggled from his embrace and was gone.

Ah, yes! He saw it all now. Their little interviews had been discovered, and the jealous lover had laid his commands upon his betrothed. What was to be done? But his judgment, kind, good monitor, came to his aid, and he once more felt himself a man.

The days have rippled on down the restless stream, and to-morrow Edgarton leaves the island. A ship rests upon the lake outside, and a boat is waiting at the harbor to convey his baggage thither. Edgarton has just stepped upon the shore, returning from a visit to the noble craft which is to bear him away.

"We will return for you this evening," was said, as the boat pushed off from shore again; "for if the wind prove favorable, we must be off by midnight."

Little more remained for him to do—a short visit to the fort, a few affectionate adieus to be spoken, a general "good-

bye" to his companions, and finally a visit to the mission house to receive for the last time the kindly benediction which awaited him.

The curtains of evening were slowly encircling the earth, shutting out once more retiring day, as Edgarton was sitting in company with his kind friend in front of the mission house, watching the progress of the boat which was approaching from the ship.

"I must confess my regrets," said Mr. Hawes, after a short silence, "at Flora's choice. She does not seem to me like a daughter of the uncivilized people, and I would much rather she should not unite herself to them; but as she is undeniably of them, we shall be forced to be content with her decision. No doubt it will prove for the best. God is wiser than we, and I fully believe in his overruling power in all things."

Edgarton was about to reply, when a voice summoned his companion away. Quick as thought, Flora darted from her hiding-place and stood before him.

"Oh," she exclaimed, passionately, "I thought I should not see you again, and you would not bid me good-bye."

"You would not permit me," exclaimed Edgarton, hurriedly.

"Meet me there in an hour—will you?" she asked, pointing with her finger to their old trysting-place, just a little way beyond.

"Wehegan?" whispered Edgarton.

"He will be gone. Will you come?"

"Yes, I'll be there," and with this assurance, she as quickly disappeared.

Slowly the boat with its crew entered the little harbor, and Edgarton, bidding his friend, who had now returned, a hasty adieu, hurried down to the beach to greet them. A short conversation with the sturdy tars, a few words of merriment, and a silver coin in the hands of each, awoke

their good humor; and when Edgarton left them, they promised to be there in an hour to await his return.

The beautiful stars were coming forth one by one from their hiding-places, reflecting their mild, pure light in the tranquil waters, as he once more, and for the last time, seated himself upon the moss-covered rocks where he had often sat before, and waited for a familiar footfall that would greet his ear but once again.

A sadness oppressed him. Why had he promised to come? It would have been so much better not to have met her again. How could he leave that beautiful girl to be the sport of unknown circumstances? But it must not be so. "How gladly I would have saved her from the fate which awaits her!" he audibly soliloquized; "but she would not—no, she would not."

A small arm was thrown around his neck and a head dropped upon his shoulder.

"Sweet fairy," he murmured, returning her caresses, "you are weeping. Do you, then, wish you had consented to go with me? Oh, you do not know what a fine lady I would have made of you. You would have been honored and loved, and I, proud of my beautiful Flora. It was cruel in you—yes, mockery—to give yourself to that Indian warrior. You do not love him. Neither does he love you one half as well as I do. Why would you not go with me?"

"Hush, hush!" she murmured. "Do not talk so. It makes me tremble. Oh, I should not have come here. But I was wretched. You have been so kind, so gentle, not like any one else. Oh, it will be dark to the poor Owaeta when you are gone;" and again her head drooped and sobs convulsed her frame.

"Do not weep, but tell me why you would never meet me since our last visit to this spot."

"Wehegan's eyes spake death to the white man, as he bade me not see you again, and I dared not."

"Where is he to-night?"

"Left the island an hour ago, or I should not have been here."

"Poor child! you are afraid of the warrior with whom you must always live. Flora, I cannot endure it. Go with me; it is not too late. I will protect you."

"No, no, no! I cannot! I dare not!" She lay upon his bosom, poor, innocent child! and the bright stars looked lovingly upon her and smiled. Hark! she suddenly starts to her feet and becomes silent and motionless as a statue, while her keen, dark eyes peer steadily through the darkness which surrounds the overhanging cliff.

"You could have heard nothing," said Edgerton, clasping her waist and standing beside her. "You are unnecessarily alarmed."

Again she started, and the next moment an arrow whizzed by their heads, and a dark form arose from behind the shadow of a rock. With a wild scream the poor girl fell lifeless at his feet. No time was to be lost. The dark figure was evidently climbing the cliff from the bank beneath. Edgerton raised his rifle and fired. The shot was effectual. A smothered cry reached his ear, a crash, and all was still.

Clasping the insensible girl in his arms, he hastened from his exposed position, where a dozen other concealed forms might be awaiting the opportunity to rush upon him, and with his burden hurried to the boat.

"Now, boys, away to the ship!" he shouted, placing the maiden upon some blankets lying in the stern, "for the girl has fainted, and your good captain's wife can aid me in restoring her. I'll tell you all about it when we get there," he added, seeing that they still hesitated; and with this assurance, the boat was soon flying rapidly down the straits to the open waters of the lake.

CHAPTER XII.

RECONCILED TO THE CHANGE.

THE "Great Western" was a noble ship for the time of which we write—"a perfect model of a craft," her good captain would fondly say, as he walked complacently about on her clean, white deck. However this might be, it was the best that had then found its way to those northern waters, and proved a very pleasant retreat for Edgarton and his young charge during their long voyage over the lakes. Mrs. Mason, the captain's wife, and an unmarried sister of the latter, were on board, and to these two ladies he disclosed his evening's adventure, his former plans concerning the poor girl, who was rapidly recovering under their careful attentions and as many of his future wishes in the premises as he felt disposed to communicate. But bewildered as his own thoughts were by the strange incidents that had been crowded into the last two hours, he could not clearly and accurately define even to himself his present position, or his future course of action.

Of one thing, however, he felt fully assured: before him lay the Indian girl, and in a few moments more he must commence the task, not certainly without a hope on his part of complete success, of reconciling her to the sudden change in her career. Would it really be a difficult one? What if, after all, she indeed loved the brave Wehegan, and would not become reconciled to the idea of leaving him for ever? Should he tell her that his trusty rifle had severed the bond that once bound the warrior to her? Ah! she might hate him for the hasty act, and he for ever regret the unpremeditated step he had taken.

Buried in his unpleasant meditations, he did not perceive that her eyes were open and fixed with a wild, inquiring look upon him, until one of his companions, who had stepped aside that the girl might not be excited by the sight of a strange face when consciousness returned, touched his shoulder and called him back from his abstraction.

"Where am I?" faintly whispered the feeble voice; "tell me where—where am I?"

"In a place of safety, dear Flora. Can you not trust me?"

"I have had such a strange dream," she murmured—"such a strange, strange dream."

"Strange, indeed, no doubt. But tell me, Flora," he said, taking her hand, "would you not like to go with me among my people, and become great and learned and a fine lady, as the governor prophesied you would some day, so that in a few years you may return to the island and help your teacher in converting your people and making them so much wiser and better than they are now?"

"No, no, no!" she answered, emphatically; and then, as if a sudden recollection had darted into her mind, she started up and almost shrieked, "Wehegan! where is he? Oh, he didn't kill you?"

"No, no, fairy! he did not even injure me. I am beside you, and alive and well."

"Thank God! But where is Wehegan? I must go to him. Tell him I am his own Owaeta, who loves only the bold warrior to whom she pledged her vow;" and she feebly struggled to disengage her hand.

"Listen to me, Flora. You remember how we met to say good-bye, and that our interview was—"

"Oh yes, yes! I remember it all," she interrupted, with a shudder; "but where is he?"

"You were lying insensible at my feet, and in one moment more one of us—perhaps both—might have been sacrificed to his infuriated jealousy. Should I have re-

mained idle and awaited his further movements, or should I have ensured our safety, and saved the life of both of us, by prompt action? Which would you have wished?"

"Oh, you have killed him! you have killed him!"

"Perhaps not, Flora. I fired, it is true, and he did not appear again to molest us, so I brought you safely to the ship, and in a few hours we shall be far away from the island."

Flora had turned her head from the speaker, and was weeping silently.

"Flora, you do not condemn my act? Tell me at least that you do not hate me for what I have done."

"Leave me, leave me!" she exclaimed, passionately; "I cannot talk to you now;" and Edgerton, motioning the two ladies to remain silent, left the cabin and went upon deck.

In about an hour Mrs. Mason informed him that Flora had been conversing freely with them, and had expressed a wish to see him. He did not wait to hear more, but hurriedly descended the narrow stairway to the cabin. Flora, looking sad and dejected, was sitting up in her narrow bed.

"Did I offend you?" she plaintively asked, placing her hand timidly in his. "I did not intend to do so, but I hardly knew what I said. Poor Wehegan! Long ago he loved the lonely Owaeta, when he visited our wigwam on the mountain side and brought rare gifts to me which he had purchased from the white men, who often came to the island. It makes me very sad when I think of him, but I did not mean to offend you."

"You have not, fairy; do not think of it. I am glad that you are better," he said, cheerfully, wishing to change the current of her thoughts; "and we shall be very happy. I must go and write a letter to your teacher, to be sent back by the first opportunity, and you must go to sleep, for you need rest. To-morrow I will tell you my plans for your happiness and improvement." So saying, he play-

fully laid her back upon the pillow, smiling encouragingly as he bade her good-night and left her.

It was nearly midnight when he sought his berth to rest, but not to sleep. The wind had just risen to a brisk, lively breeze, and all hands were on deck, spreading the canvas to catch it. The sound of hurrying footsteps overhead and the turmoil of his own troubled thoughts drove slumber from his pillow, and before the sun had looked up again from beneath the waves he stood upon the deck, bathing his uncovered head in the cool morning air, and looking back upon the broad lake's expanse over which they were leisurely sailing.

"Changing, ever changing," he murmured. "Ah, who can contemplate the myriad changes through which we are ceaselessly hurried with the speed of thought?"

"Laughing in the sunlight,
 Bounding o'er the billow,
 Sporting on the wavelet,
 Weeping 'neath the willow,
 Dashing down the streamlet
 Where the rapids roar,
 Mooring 'neath the shadow
 Of a rocky shore,
 Climbing up the mountain,
 Gliding through the glen,
 Sighing at the fountain
 Bubbling in our ken,
 Looking at the future
 With a hazy eye,
 Hurrying through the present
 With a mournful sigh,
 Mingling clouds and sunshine
 In a daily strife,—
 Bless me, these are changes
 On the road of life!"

Not caring to accompany the travelers day by day in their protracted and wearisome journey, we will merely

take a peep into their little saloon, a few hours before the completion of their voyage. Flora looks more beautiful than ever in her chintz wrapper, which has kindly been provided for her, and her face lights up with an inexpressible pleasure, as picture after picture of her future is held up to her wondering gaze by those around.

"We will make your stay at Buffalo a very pleasant one," said Mrs. Mason, "and I will see that everything is provided for your wardrobe which any young lady could desire."

"Everything," echoed Edgerton; "my little *protégé* shall not shine a lesser star in the bright galaxy of beauty and fashion collected at Mrs. Willard's school."

"Oh, you will spoil me with vanity," exclaimed Flora, smiling and raising her hand deprecatingly.

"Ha, ha, ha! I only wish it were I," said the lively Miss Eastman. "I would not look so distressed at such a glowing prospect, I can assure you."

"I am not distressed," interrupted Flora—"indeed, I am very happy; only I shall not always remember that I am of French descent and an orphan *protégé* of Sir Edgerton, and that my name is Flora Hawes, instead of simple Owaeta, the Indian girl," she said, laughing.

"Oh, you sweet novice!" replied Edgerton, enthusiastically. "But you will soon learn the power of my lessons, and thank me for them, too. This world is easily wheedled by high-sounding words, and a titled name, my child, is a fine lubricator for aristocratic knees. Ha, ha! How I have seen heads bowing, and hats making all sorts of obsequious movements in the air, when a whisper reached astonished ears that in my father's land the honored title of 'Lord' awaited me! I tell you, fairy, a few famed ones can well afford to put their talents in a napkin, and bury them too, for the matter of that, for they will get along just as well without them. Wealth and position supply all difficulties in worth or intellect. Isn't it so, captain?"

“Just so, sir. There is my wife—handsome, talented and good. No need of her marrying a poor old sailor like myself if she hadn't been poor. No, no; poverty has been my blessing, you see, sir. So, of course, I am the old fellow's friend; but it's true as preaching, every word you say, though.”

All joined merrily in the laugh, and Flora darted up on deck to watch the land that lay a few miles before them like a broad, dark belt upon the water.

CHAPTER XIII.

RECEPTION AT PLEASANT COTTAGE.

IN a pleasantly shaded street of a beautiful city that stretches itself along the banks of the noble Hudson stands a neat white cottage, two stories high, with a smooth green lawn in front, dotted with numerous hardy shrubs, and overshadowed by tall, widespreading maples, where the birds sing their cheerful songs through all the long summer days, and the winds chant their low, sad music when the branches are bare and the leaves are withered by the frost king's breath, and lie scattered and faded upon the pitying earth.

Often has the humble laborer, on his way to the busy thoroughfare where his daily toils were to commence, stopped before this quiet little cottage and sighed for such a home, where he might be sure his unsatisfied desires might be fully realized.

Upon the silver plate, on the outer door, is engraved in very black letters the name of "E. W. Edwards," which serves as a stereotyped introduction of the gentlemanly proprietor of the establishment to the bustling world outside, and few there were who knew more of him than the passer-by could learn by this simple announcement. Ye nearly twelve years before, he had left his native land with his small family and the remnant of his once ample fortune, and after a few months' tarry in New York had taken up his abode here, isolating himself from society, and seeking the communion or friendship of none. None, therefore, cared to intrude themselves upon him.

It was a chill evening in early autumn, and the family

were gathered around a glowing fire that was crackling on the hearth in the little back parlor, its flickering light throwing over the antique furniture an air of comfort, and even of luxury. A small round table was drawn up in front, upon which stood a large oil lamp, whose lesser light was almost lost in the bright glow which filled the apartment.

Five persons occupied the rooms, some reading, others sewing, but one, with his elbow resting upon the table and head averted, seemed busily engaged in marking the progress of a few half-benumbed flies that were lazily crawling over the ceiling with a low, fitful hum of satisfaction as the heat from below warmed and reanimated them. That face was not generally pleasing to look upon, but to-night an unusual acidity was impressed into his sharp, prominent features, almost changing his blue eye into a deep restless gray. Opposite, busily engaged with her needle, sat the wife and mother, whose locks, like those of her husband, were bleached by the storms and sunshine of many years, and whose face bore the lines which Time's fingers had registered upon it; still, her aquiline nose and her tightly compressed lips showed that a cord of sympathy and congeniality united those two aged hearts in a strong bond of affinity. Two daughters and a son, their only children, still remained with them. The eldest, "Lena," had been very pretty. Her eyes were large and bewitchingly blue; her flaxen hair fell in rich glossy curls about a finely moulded head and neck, overshadowing features indisputably regular and well portrayed, but the roses were fading upon her cheek, and the freshness and bloom of youth had departed from lips and brow, leaving behind the disfiguring scars of discontent and mortification. Why Miss Lena had never been a belle, and long before this the honored mistress of a coach-and-four, was beyond her comprehension. But, disappointed as she evidently was, hope had not yet forsaken her. "She would yet fill the prominent position

in life for which her beauty and ancestral connections had so fully fitted her."

E. W. Edwards, Jr., was some years younger than Lena, with a fine person, good features, and, as he asserted, "an excellent appreciation of his talents and superiority over those with whom he unwittingly mingled day by day in a business relation, not because circumstances demanded it, but from a philanthropic desire to benefit his race. Great men of all ages had done this before him, and it was right that he should descend from the lofty pedestal upon which his lineage had placed him, and follow their humane example." Therefore, three years before, E. W. Edwards, Jr., had entered as under-clerk the extensive establishment of V. & D. Morvin, where every day he wasted his mighty powers upon unnumbered rolls of tape and lofty pyramids of calico, "warranted fast colors," which it was his duty to display to the gaze of admiring purchasers.

There was one other member of that family circle thus grouped on that chill autumnal eve. This was a girl of sixteen, with bright yellow hair and complexion of sallow hue, small gray eyes, a nose sharp and pointed, a mouth unusually large, and seemingly altogether out of place on a face so small; but the lips were full, and were it not for the traces of sadness that lingered upon them, hiding the smile with which nature had adorned them, a *connoisseur* would have pronounced it, in spite of its proportions, rather pretty.

But Phelura—or "Fury," as she was called by every member of the family—was a "fright." Who could doubt it? Not the unhappy girl herself, assuredly; for it was the lesson which she had learned in her earliest years, and from its constant repetition thenceforward she was not likely to forget it or become unconscious of the fact. She was sitting upon a low ottoman by the fire, with a book upon her lap. She had been reading, but her mind had wandered away from the pages before her, and now she sat looking dreamily into the smouldering embers upon the hearth.

"To-morrow?" exclaimed Lena, passionately. "Indeed Enure it? The more I think of it, the more out of patience I become. Why didn't you say positively you would not take her?"

This question was addressed to the mother, who was sitting near her. She said nothing in reply—did not even look up—but kept on stitching, stitching, as before.

The father, however, replied, nervously hitching upon his chair, "We had our reasons, child, and it does not become you to question them." This was spoken imperiously, and for a few moments Miss Lena remained silent.

"Reasons!" she at last muttered between her teeth—"reasons! I can see a score of reasons why she ought to have sunk in the lake instead of being thrust in here, where she is not wanted. She'll wish she had been, too, before she has been here six months, or I have no English blood in my veins, that's all!"

The small gray eyes were quietly raised from the dying embers and fixed upon the speaker. A new light seemed flashing up from their hidden depths, but it was smothered, and in a moment more the eager look had wandered back to its former resting-place.

"You heard the command I gave you?" asked the mother, quickly.

"Yes."

"Be very guarded in the exhibition of yourself before Sir Charles, while he remains with us. After he has gone we will talk more openly on the subject."

"How long is he to honor us, mother?"

"He did not say."

"Humph! as long as he chooses, I suppose."

* "As long as we choose," replied the father, sternly.

A few moments of silence, and Lena with great bustle arose and left the room.

"Sis seems quite infuriated," said the young man, languidly. "I suppose she did not like the clause in her

honored cousin's letter describing the beauty of his fair *protégé*. A rival certainly would be unpleasant, although I know nothing of it by personal experience."

Here the superior personage ran his taper fingers through his abundant locks, which were certainly quite too light for auburn, smoothed his chin, and proceeded :

"For my part, I rather like the idea of her coming. A poor unsophisticated orphan that has been reared in seclusion can be greatly benefited in our family, and in the circle in which we move; and it is no doubt our duty to do what little good we can in the world."

"Undoubtedly," replied the father, sneeringly; and soon after this closing argument the family adjourned for the night.

It was late in the succeeding afternoon that the heavy, lumbering stage, with its four lank, lean, spavined horses, turned the corner from Congress street into Third, and drew up, with an evident attempt at display, before the neat white cottage alluded to. The door of the coach was opened, and two travelers—a gentleman and lady richly but plainly attired—alighted and stood upon the pavement. When the trunks had all been handed down and deposited beside them, they entered the gate and proceeded toward the house.

"No one to welcome us," remarked the gentleman, as he ascended the steps and rang the bell. "I think they must have forgotten we were coming to-day."

The summons was speedily answered by a shabby, red-faced, red-haired Irish girl, who greeted them with a good-natured look and ushered them into the parlor, where a brisk fire was blazing a cheerful welcome. The door through which they had entered was very soon opened, and Mrs. Edwards, tall and stately and most imposingly attired, stood before them.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Charles," she began, with great dignity, as she extended her hand, "but the stage arrived

much earlier than usual to-night, and we were not expecting you for a half-hour at least."

Edgerton assured her that their reception needed no apology, and then presented Miss Hawes, his orphan *protégé*. Flora almost shrank from the cold touch, and the more chilling scrutiny of those icy gray eyes which seemed riveted upon her.

"I hope you will be very happy with us," Mrs. Edwards remarked, stiffly bowing; then, turning to Edgerton, she continued, with a bland smile, "Your friend is older than I was led to suppose."

"Just the age I mentioned," he replied, quickly.

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the other members of the family, when several presentations passed off with freezing ceremony. No, there was one who shrank away from this formal exhibition of a selfish politeness, and sat in the solitude of her own room and wept.

Poor child! She murmured through her tears, "We shall both be unhappy. Oh, if she would let me be her friend! But no, she will shrink from me, and very soon will learn to call me 'Fury.' Oh how I hate that word, and how I hate every one that speaks it! Yes; I hate—why shouldn't I? and I shall hate her! Ah, there's the tea-bell; but I'll not go down. Nobody will inquire for me."

And in a paroxysm of grief, the unhappy girl threw herself upon the bed, and sobbed more bitterly than before. She was mistaken, however; Edgerton did inquire for the absent one, as they gathered around the table.

"She does not care to come, I suppose," replied Lena, evasively, and his former suspicions concerning her were thoroughly sustained. He had read much in that plain, sad face during his former visit to the cottage, and a feeling of sympathy had been awakened within him.

The supper passed off more pleasantly than might have been expected. Mr. Edwards, Sr., partially stepped out of

his reserve, throwing aside his cynic frown, and donning in its stead an awkward mask of smiles, which seemed in strange keeping with his sharp, iron features; his wife, ever reflecting his shadow, caught the contagious influence of his urbanity, and smiled too; the junior Edwards stroked his chin caressingly, and made many fine speeches upon his pet topics of condescension and philanthropy; while Miss Lena tossed her pretty curls quite becomingly, and laughed heartily at the pleasing *bon mots* of their honored guest, who was evidently exerting himself to be unusually entertaining. Flora was silent, though joining occasionally in the merry laugh, and her face wore an expression of sadness which she was very glad to attribute to weariness from her long journey. Her quick glance had penetrated the thin guise of assumed affability with which they had been welcomed and entertained, and the casual glimpse had given her a peep into the future from which her sensitive nature shrank back with ominous forebodings.

The travelers, pleading fatigue, retired at an early hour, and Flora, after dismissing Miss Lena, who expressed the hope that she would do her the honor of accepting her services whenever she might require them, threw herself upon her knees, and for a long time remained motionless and silent. Did she pray? Her lips moved not, and words found no form in the humble supplication that went up from that fondly-trusting heart, as the smoke of sweet-burning incense from the altar of prophetic faith. Yet God heard it; the unspoken petition of a trembling child reached the Father's ear, and he comforted her. Blessed influence, that reaches from earth to heaven, on which our wants ascend, and sweet answers of peace are sent down to cheer the lonely wanderer!

The sun was peeping in at the closed windows the next morning before Flora awoke from her refreshing slumber. Hurriedly arising, she had nearly finished her morning toilet, when the door opened and a stranger approached.

"Do not be afraid of me," the visitor said, almost in a whisper; "I know I am a fright, and I wanted to see you alone first, that they should not witness your surprise as you looked upon me."

Flora's heart was touched. She had never listened to such a wail of dejection, and she stepped forward, clasped the little cold hand in her own, as she said,

"You are not a fright; who could be so cruel as to tell you so?"

"Oh yes, I am," she answered, with a faint smile; "I know I am dreadfully ugly, and that you are the most beautiful creature I ever saw."

"Then I wish I could divide looks with you—equalize this beauty in some way. I do not want to be so very beautiful. Neither extreme can bring happiness."

"Would you give me some of your beauty if you could?" inquired the astonished girl, eagerly.

"Most certainly I would."

"Then I will tell you how you can take away a portion of my ugliness, if you will."

"Tell me," said Flora; "I shall be more than happy to gratify you."

"Be my friend; let me love you. It is hatred that doubles my ugliness—yes, hate!" she almost hissed through her closed teeth. "They hate me," she continued, pointing to the door, "and I pay them back in their own coin, that's all. But there's love in my heart, almost enough to quench the burning fires which are consuming me, if I could find some one to unseal the closed fountain and call it forth."

"Let me, then, perform that pleasing office," said Flora, throwing her arms about the neck of the agitated girl. "Oh, it will make me so happy to do you good."

"God bless you! God bless you!" she murmured, reverently and slowly. "But one thing more I want to ask of you. Pardon me if I am troublesome, but do not call me

Fury ;' it makes me wicked, and kills every good desire or wish in my heart."

"Be sure I will not. But what is your name? and why do they call you by such an ugly one?"

"Because they say it becomes me. But my name is Phelura—horrid enough in itself, but worse in its abbreviation."

"Phelura? It is not such a horrid name, but very odd. How would you like to be called Lura? I shall not feel that we are dear friends if I must always call you Phelura, and then I love pet names. Shall I call you Lura?"

"Oh yes, that will do."

A slight tap at the door was heard, and Miss Lena entered with a smiling "good-morning" upon her lips. She started, as she saw her sister, and a frown drove the smile away.

"Ah! you choose to seek a private interview and perform your own presentation?"

"We have had a very pleasant time," interrupted Flora, "and she has curled my hair nicely. I think I must get her to do it every morning."

"Very well, if she can be of service to you. But our breakfast is ready, and Sir Charles has inquired for you."

They descended to the little parlor, and Flora's new life in her present sphere had already commenced. Changing scenes were before her, and through the kaleidoscope of her fertile imagination she beheld their varying hues, and wondered.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ANTICIPATED SEPARATION.

A MONTH of pleasure. How soon, alas! how very soon, it passes away, and leaves behind it, when one mingles again in the stern realities of life, many sad regrets and many aching voids that memory cannot fill! Many bright flowers bloom to gladden us along our toilsome pathway, and many golden hours that are scattered like glittering gems along our shadowed past, upon whose gentle glow beams the faithful promise, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end." Yet the faint heart droops when the sweet flowers fade and wither, and weary eyes grow dim gazing with anxious longing back upon departed brightness.

Flora could scarcely realize that four weeks had actually passed since her arrival at the cottage, yet facts abundantly proved that they were gone—two weeks in New York and vicinity, accompanied by Edgerton, Miss Lena and her brother, as *chaperon*; one week devoted to reconnoitring and exploring the environs of their own pleasant city; and the last, where had it gone? A trip to Albany, one day spent upon the island, a fishing excursion, a picnic, two rainy days spent with Edgerton in the cheerful little front parlor, talking of their future and his journey home, where he would spend four years, then return to find her changed, but ever remaining his own good fairy.

To-morrow she would be presented to Mrs. Willard. Oh, how her heart throbbed at the thought! Yet she would be valiant. For his sake she would do more than ever pupil accomplished before. Yes, she would be all he wished.

Slowly the red leaves were falling one by one from the variegated maples that bordered the lawn; chill autumn winds were abroad, scattering death upon the land, and trees and shrubs and the bright green grass had felt his withering touch, and were drooping, dying.

“Soon Winter, with his bustling train
Of wind and snow and hail and rain,
Would come, and with his icy hand
Seal up the grave of the faded land,
And spread the pall of snow and sleet,
And wrap the earth in a winding sheet.
Then will the passing whisper say,
‘Beauties of earth, ye have passed away.’”

But what should Flora care for all these? Before her lay the goal for which she was to strive—his pleasure, his approbation—and all things else would be forgotten. Foolish heart! How little it understands the source from which it draws its strength and support! Like the tender young vine, it is continually reaching forth with its frail tendrils for something to which to cling. And oh how often it clasps some broken reed or passing shrub! and the first adverse wind snaps the frail support, or it withers and dies from an uncongenial and contaminating alliance.

Flora was standing alone by the parlor window, looking out upon the faded lawn and the gorgeous leaves that slowly followed each other in their mute dance to the earth, gayly decked for the grave and decay. She had turned from the future, with its glowing dreams and pleasing pictures, only tinted here and there with a sombre shade to make the scene more enchanting, which Edgerton had hung all along the gallery of Time through which she was to pass, and she was once more living in the scenes of her childhood's days. Ah! she was happy then, the poor little Indian girl, free and wild as the deer of her own native hills, skipping over the woodland before the birds were awake with their matin songs, and returning to that rude

home laden with the rich trophies of the forest fruits and flowers for her aged mother. And then Wehegan—the bold, brave warrior who had so often called her “his own Owaeta”—did he yet live? A slender arrow of hickory which his own hand had made he had given her at their last parting. This she still retained, and tears filled her eyes at the thought that the hand which fashioned it was motionless and cold.

A stealthy step approached, and then a hand gently pressed each cheek, as Edgerton whispered,

“There are dew-drops upon these roses, fairy. What means it? Not withering, I hope, in an uncongenial clime?”

“Flowers soon fade without the rain-drops and the dew. But you are an intruder, to steal so silently in upon my secret reverie.”

“It may be, fairy, but I am forgiven—I see pardon written all over your beaming face; and now I want to know what makes you sad.”

“Can I not have the privilege of shedding one tear in the anticipation of your departure? or must I clap my hands in glee at those long four years that keep staring at me from the impenetrable darkness of the future?”

“Fairy, fairy, you astonish me. It is true you are not a child—”

“Nor an Egyptian mummy just disintombed,” said Flora.

“Well, what are you, then? For my part, I can’t make you out; you puzzle me!”

“So did Benicia puzzle the noble Horatio. I am not the first to do such a wicked thing. Wait until your return after those four long years have dragged themselves away. Perhaps—perhaps—”

“Perhaps what, fairy?”

“Perhaps I shall be more civilized, and you can understand me better,” said Flora.

“More civilized, indeed! Why, fairy, I have had many

doubts about the possibility of educating or improving you, since I have been daily with you."

"And have concluded to send me back to the island?" she asked, with provoking seriousness.

"Oh ho! the sun shines brilliantly after the shower. But I do not so readily give up the work of civilization of which you just spoke, and shall impatiently wait for those four crawling years to get out of the way, that I may return and behold the great work for myself. In the meantime, I can judge somewhat of its progress by those promised letters which I shall receive every few weeks."

"Oh, you don't know how it makes me shudder to think of standing before that stiff, black satin dress to-morrow; and then to be introduced to all those rude laughing girls who walk past here every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon!"

"Fie, fairy! That will soon be over, and then you will have so many dear friends in the school that I shall very soon be forgotten. There is the dinner-bell. Tell me, fairy, how you like your friends here. Do you think you shall be very happy with them?"

"Oh yes, if Miss Lena does not overpower me with a too frequent repetition of her former grandeur and her present beauty and position, or E. W. annihilate me by his 'great light,'" she replied, laughing heartily. "But there is one for whom I entertain an abiding affection or pity—I can hardly tell which—but whose society I am sure will be a great comfort to me, and that is poor Lura. She seems so unhappy at all times, except when we are alone; then her whole face is changed. I have really thought her quite good-looking more than once."

"I am very glad that you have taken an interest in the poor girl, and really hope that the good you bestow upon her may return fourfold upon yourself. But we must answer that summons to dinner, or we shall receive one from Miss Lena *in propria persona*."

The trials of the next day were encountered by Flora with much less of discomfort than she had imagined. The kind words and gentle assurances of Mrs. Willard, who was always affable and pleasing to the young, inspired her with great confidence; and when, at last, she was ushered by the lady herself into the examination room upon the first floor, where over two hundred young ladies of various ages and sizes were gathered for the semi-weekly exercises, she met their curious gaze with a slight tremor and downcast eyes. There were a few whispers near her, one or two of which reached her ears. "She is beautiful," said one directly behind her. "Too dark," said her companion; then an inaudible murmur, a low, subdued laugh, and they were silent, for Mrs. Willard's eyes were upon them, and in a mild voice she was giving the school generally a few simple rules of conduct to be observed at all times upon the entrance of a new pupil among them.

A prayer closed the exercises, and Flora, greatly strengthened for her future, but not altogether free from discordant feelings, returned to the cottage with Edgerton, who had waited in the parlor until the ceremony of introduction should be over. A sensitive chord had been touched by words not intended for her ear, and it would continue to vibrate long after her head rested upon her pillow. But sleep came at last and stilled its restless motion, throwing over her exciting present the mantle of forgetfulness and repose.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KEEPSAKE.

"**Y**OU know not how much pain this separation gives me. I have so long looked upon you as the good fairy whose magic wand could turn the wheels of my destiny away from every ill and change all my sadness into joy that I begin to realize how very much I shall miss you."

It was their last farewell, and Flora, too, understood how dreary her days would be without that cheering voice, those gentle words with which he always greeted her, and, more than all, without any one to love her and call her names of endearing tenderness. They were alone, the members of the family being engaged in the various duties attendant upon the departure of their guest, and the head of the weeping girl had dropped upon his shoulder.

"Flora," he said, bending over her, "I am going to whisper a little keepsake in your ear which I wish you to cherish and keep sacred for me until my return. Will you?"

She did not answer, and he raised her head from its resting-place, kissed her fondly, and then whispered,

"I love you, sweet fairy, purely, devotedly, and this avowal I place in your little heart for safe-keeping. Shall I come four years hence, and find it there? or will you before that time throw it away to make room for more ardent vows? Speak, fairy. I do not ask you to give me a pledge in return. No, you shall be as free as when you roamed, a birdling child, in your far-away forest, before these eyes grew wild feeding upon your beauty. I only ask

you to keep my little forget-me-not in that priceless casket, a heart unspotted by the selfishness of the world, until I shall see you again."

Flora was bewildered. These were strange words to her, yet she understood them. Often, when she breathed her evening prayer with simple devotion, had she thanked her kind heavenly Father for all his blessings, and among them for the love of this dear friend. But this was different. A more than a brother's love was conveyed in this little keepsake placed in her care, and for a moment she stood overwhelmed, powerless, before this new revelation thus suddenly opened before her.

"Will I keep it?" she asked, after a pause. "Will the casket be allowed to retain it four years? It is a long time, and you will see many pretty faces before you behold me again. You did not ask me for a forget-me-not, but I will give you one. This little avowal, you have this moment consigned to my keeping, I shall not lose! but you will not take it away?"

A shadow passed over his face as she spoke; but footsteps were heard upon the stairs, and a carriage had arrived to convey him to the boat. A moment more, and he must go.

"Fairy, trust me; I must leave you."

He drew her closely to him, and their lips sealed the bond that united their hearts. A few moments more, and Flora slipped unperceived from the circle which surrounded the doorway, where the last adieus had been given, and sought her own room. A new life seemed to penetrate and illumine her future, an unseen hand lifted the pall that an hour before had thrown its sombre folds over it.

"He loves me! How very strange! I, a poor Indian girl—he, the rich, noble, accomplished Sir Charles Edgerton! But, alas! this blissful dream must pass away. Oh how well I remember what my dear teacher used to tell me—not to trust their words, that my beauty is decaying property, and must be guarded with great wisdom, lest it

prove a curse. Oh, how I wish I could tell her all! She is so wise and good, and I am so weak!"

About a week after the departure, while sitting alone in her room, Lura stealthily entered and seated herself at her side. Flora started as she looked up and beheld the expression of that face. Hate, bitter hate and disgust, sat upon every feature, and her keen gray eye was burning with an intense light.

"What is the matter, Lura? Something troubles you," she said, endeavoring to appear as calm as usual.

"Something troubles *you*," she quickly responded, smothering the fire that raged within, "and I came to soothe you, not to be soothed."

"Thank you, Lura; but you see me quite composed, and fully ready for the pleasant office of comforting you. Can I be of any service to you?"

"No, no!" and the poor girl shook her head pensively. "But what book is that?" pointing to one lying open upon the table.

"My French grammar. Did you ever study French?"

"Study French, Miss Flora! Yes; if the kettles and frying-pans talk in that language, I have studied their low words of sympathy for many years."

Flora laughed heartily at this new idea of language; but Lura did not even smile. A new thought suggested itself to Flora, and she asked,

"Would you like to study it?"

Lura started to her feet and clasped her hands as she answered:

"How do you suppose the starving prodigal would have felt, when endeavoring to satisfy his hunger with the food that rightfully belonged to the swine, had a nice roast of beef fallen at his feet, and a sweet voice bade him choose and eat?"

"Upon my word, Lura, you are a genius. But you shall study with me every night. I will teach you what I have

learned through the day, and we shall both be benefited by the operation."

Flora had been turning over the leaves of her book, and had not noticed her companion, until she felt her hand grasped as in a vice, then covered with tears and kisses.

"Why, Lura, my dear Lura, does the prospect of studying make you happy?"

"Happier than you can imagine, dear Flora."

"Then suppose you commence to-night?"

"No, no, not to-night; I want to tell you a little plan which I heard talked over a few moments ago, and which I fear will make you unhappy."

"Oh, never mind me, Lura. You and I will be happy together in spite of circumstances, shall we not? But what would you tell me?"

The girl hesitated for a moment, then said, "They mean to take this pleasant little room from you, and give you the one next to Irish Mary's, where there are two beds. I know what the next step will be, for my accomplished sister does not enjoy my society or my presence in her apartment, and would be very glad to rid herself of both."

"So you and I are to have a room by ourselves? Well, that is capital. I only wish they would make the change to-day."

"I thought you wouldn't like it," said Lura, with much surprise.

The deep-toned clock sounded forth the hour of nine, and Flora, hastily throwing on her bonnet and shawl, left the room, and hurried away to school.

Merrily the school-bell chimed in with the deep tones from the church-tower over the way, cheerily sounding up and down the long halls, calling from their rooms bevyies of young, joyous creatures, who huddled together for one moment, mingling their morning salutation, then gliding away to their several recitation-rooms.

Flora skipped lightly up the broad stairway to the school-

room, where her first hour was spent in study. A few gave her a greeting smile as she passed on, and all stared curiously after her as the door closed behind her retreating figure. Here, at least, she knew a pleasing welcome awaited her, and on this hour shone the one bright ray that lit up all the cheerless routine of her daily duties.

Kitty Lane was a bright little sparkling beauty, nearly as old as herself, but very different were her laughing face and deep blue eyes, that continually sparkled with concealed merriment, and the flaxen hair that would curl all around her pretty face, in spite of many efforts to bring it down to a sober smoothness around her high, intellectual forehead—very different were all these from the calm, dark, thoughtful face of the new scholar, whom she had taken intimately into her affections, an intimacy which was fully reciprocated by Flora, who was always ready to unravel all the deep mysteries of the simple lessons which Kitty “never could see through,” and assist her with her exercises, which she never could write. In fact, lessons to this lively beauty were a bore—an opinion which she never hesitated to express in her classes; and of course she was often in disgrace with her teachers.

“I would help it if I could,” she would often say to Flora’s urgent appeal; “but indeed I hate books, and wouldn’t come to school at all, if it were not for my dancing and music lessons.”

Their desks joined, and as Flora took her seat Kitty grasped her hand triumphantly with—

“*Comment vous portez vous machere?*”

“Ah! I am sure you have your lessons nicely this morning, and you don’t need me to help you at all.”

“Grandly, grandly, only this little phrase, ‘*Je ne comprende pas.*’ I suppose I don’t twist it just right in my exercise. But you’ll fix it in just a minute.”

“I must mark you,” said the monitress, touching her lightly on the shoulder, “for Palmer sees you.”

“Go ahead! I am used to it. In fact, I should go home indignant if I should not be called out conspicuously every evening to answer for at least a dozen black lines opposite my name.”

The monitress was standing by her own desk in the centre of the room before she had half finished speaking, and was looking at her.

“Two this time?” she asked, with a merry nod.

The monitress smiled and turned away.

“Oh, you are going home with me to-night,” she said, a moment after, turning again to Flora. “Please don’t look so sober at me. I’ll not whisper another time until the bell rings, see if I do.”

Flora smiled at this extraordinary resolution, and continued studying.

A long table reached across the extensive apartment called the school-room, appropriated as a study room for the day-scholars when they were not engaged in their recitations, and around this table every hour a writing class was gathered. The last hour in the morning Flora and Kitty occupied adjacent seats at this table.

“Flora, you are as grave as a deacon to-day,” said Kitty, a few minutes after they were seated; “but I am going to have some fun.”

Flora did not notice this last sentence, for thoughts of the absent one, who was every moment going farther and farther from her, came rushing into her mind, and all things else were forgotten. She was aroused from her reverie, however, by a gentle touch upon her hand, and a folded paper was handed her. A glance revealed the inscription, “Pass it on,” and she obeyed. Then came back the parting scene—those strange words, the farewell kiss, the look of ardent affection; and how her heart throbbed with a wild pleasure it had never known before! Again her hand was touched, and that same mysterious paper was handed her. She held it a moment in surprise, and the truth flashed upon her.

"Kitty," she whispered to her companion, who was unusually interested in her copying at this moment; but the tall, stately form of Miss Palmer, the presiding officer and teacher in this apartment, towered prominently over her.

"I'll take that paper," she hissed sternly through her teeth. Flora started, and a deep blush overspread her countenance.

The teacher opened it, and read, Flora knew not what, but she saw anger in her dark eyes, and the compression of her lips showed no mercy. She passed on, and held a long consultation with Mr. Wilkes, the writing master, who arose a moment after and solemnly commanded the writer of the few words contained in the paper he held in his hand to arise. All remained in their seats.

"Miss Hawes, this paper was discovered in your hands. Can you give any information concerning it?"

"I cannot, sir," Flora answered, composedly.

"Why, he wants you to tell him how paper is made," said Kitty, in a low whisper; "can't you enlighten him? If he'd ask me, I'd tell him."

"Miss Hawes, your appearance betrays you," said Miss Palmer, with great dignity. "If you did not write it yourself, you at least know who did. The investigation will not stop here; I shall know who perpetrated this very unladylike misdemeanor, and she shall pay the penalty of her transgression."

All eyes were turned upon Flora, whose head had dropped upon the table before her, and her long black curls hid the tears that were falling fast.

"Don't," whispered Kitty, soothingly; "this will be the last of it. She always makes dreadful threats, but she won't stir it up any more."

In this the mischievous Kitty was mistaken. That night, when the entire school was collected at prayers, as usual, great was the astonishment of many to see Mrs. Willard enter with Miss Palmer, who always officiated upon these occasions. Prayers were read, and then the grave question

was taken up by the beloved principal herself. A long time she talked to them with maternal affection, telling of the grief she experienced when her faithful co-workers were treated with disrespect, and begged that the guilty one on this occasion should come forward, that the innocent might not suffer instead. No one moved.

"Miss Hawes," she continued, after a moment's pause, "can it be possible that you have so soon joined yourself to the considerable party which has long been engaged in this most disreputable practice of annoying one of my subordinates? I am very sorry!"

Flora was sobbing aloud, and could not answer. Kitty Lane was sitting beside her, pale and agitated, and the words, "No more than might be expected," "I am glad that I did not take her up," were audible in the ears of the weeping girl. Kitty heard them too, and with sudden determination beaming in her pale face, she arose and walked to the centre of the room.

"Miss Palmer, it was I who committed that misdemeanor, and not Flora Hawes, whom you accuse. It was my first offence of the kind; and if you will forgive me, I solemnly declare it shall be my last." Here the beautiful girl burst into tears, and a murmur of applause filled the room.

"Noble girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Willard, taking her hand and drawing her toward her; "you have won many hearts by your confession, and Miss Palmer, I know, freely forgives you. But the trembling, weeping girl yonder has more than any one else to forgive in this affair. You have permitted her to suffer under a weight of suspicion for more than four hours, and her silent tears tell us how keenly she has felt the stigma. Go to her, my child. If she speaks your pardon, go, and sin no more."

Kitty rushed to her side, and for a moment the two friends sobbed in the fond embrace of reconciliation. More closely than ever were these hearts united; a breach had been made, but the golden chain of forgiveness had bound them together as one.

CHAPTER XVI.

WELCOME TIDINGS.

"OH, it snows, it snows!" and Kitty Lane clapped her hands in the exuberance of her glee; "and there's a good time coming—sleigh-rides, and dancing-parties; I shall have one myself. Mr. Pardee is coming with the whole class; he told mamma he would. Look! don't you see it snows?"

"Yes," answered Flora, who had been silently listening to her companion—"yes, I see that it snows, and I also see that it rains. Your sleigh-ride will not come off this week. Don't you see it melts as fast as it falls?"

"Sure enough; and how are we to get home? The walks are covered with snow and rain."

"Oh, nicely. Come; I'll show you how;" and the two girls tripped lightly down the stone steps, along the gravel walk and through the heavy side gate that led into the street.

"Oh, here is our carriage," exclaimed Kitty. "Why, Jim, you nice fellow! You came after me, didn't you?"

"Certainly," answered a tall, overgrown lad, descending from the driver's box to open the door.

"Come, Flora, ride home with me, and then Jim will take you around to Third street. Won't you, Jim?"

"Certainly," he again answered; and after some persuasion, Flora entered the carriage.

"Now, at least, you will see where I live," said Kitty as the door closed upon them. "I don't see what makes you so selfish; you shut yourself up in that little white cottage as though it was the best place on earth. I have been

teasing you for six weeks to come and see my pretty mamma; she is the handsomest and best that ever lived."

"I don't doubt it," said Flora. "But you know I have all my lessons to prepare, besides some other small duties to perform which occupy all my time."

"Pshaw! I suppose you think I don't have any lessons to prepare. But really, you ought to see me study."

Just then the carriage stopped before a large stone building, with marble steps, which looked cold and grand in its exposed situation, standing, as it did, upon the walk, without a tree or shrub to be seen, and the rain-drops trickling fast down the iron balustrades that projected from the upper windows.

"Oh, there's mamma in the door, waiting for me. Isn't she beautiful?"

"She looks just like you. But who is that pale girl standing beside her?"

"Our seamstress; she is going home, I suppose."

As the carriage door opened, Flora heard Mrs. Lane ask Jim if he would take Anna home, as it was rather bad walking.

"Certainly," was again the reply; and she began to wonder if he had committed to memory any other word from the dictionary, when Kitty sprang up the steps and was clasped in her mother's arms. Hearing her own name mentioned, she looked up, and saw the eyes of Mrs. Lane fixed upon her.

"Won't you come in, my dear?" said the voice of the lady.

But Flora declined; and the seamstress entering the carriage, they drove away. It was a pale, sweet face that was opposite her, and the eyes that looked all the time intently from the carriage window were calm and blue as the sky of a summer's eve. Her dark brown hair was combed back, and lay in rich waves upon her transparent brow,

Neither had spoken when the carriage stopped in front of the cottage. Flora alighted, bidding her companion a tender good-bye, which was responded to in faint tones.

Entering the hall, the junior Edwards met her with the welcome information that he had a letter for her. She expressed her thanks, and extended her hand to receive it.

"No, no," said he, stepping back; "I shall not give it to you until you look at me. I am not such a bad-looking fellow;" and he stroked his chin soothingly, and ran his long fingers through his luxuriant hair. "Not so ugly that you need fear to give me a glance. You haven't raised your eyes to my face for the last six weeks."

"I am sure you are mistaken. But I have now been gazing at you for sixty seconds at least. Will you not be so kind as to give me my reward?"

"I am sure my motives are noble and honorable concerning you, Miss Flora," he said, handing her the letter, "and I would be very glad to do you good."

Flora thanked him. The sound of the tea-bell terminated the conversation; and placing the precious missive in her pocket, she entered the room.

"You have a letter?" said Miss Lena as she seated herself at the table.

"Yes."

"Let me see it."

"I have not yet read it myself," said Flora, coloring with indignation.

"Never mind; I can read it while you are drinking your tea, and you can have it afterward."

"No," said Flora, emphatically; "it is my letter, and I must read it before any one else."

"Give Lena the letter from her cousin," said Mr. Edwards, authoritatively. "It is no doubt written for us as well as yourself; what is the difference who reads it first?"

Without speaking, Flora arose from the table and left the room.

"I'll see that letter," said Lena, after she had gone. "A pretty upstart! She considers herself grand, no doubt."

"Yes, upstart, sure enough," echoed the mother. "It's very strange how these creatures can crow when raised from the mire into which nature carelessly dumped them, and placed on a slight elevation of respectability."

"Miss Flora is undoubtedly right," said the young man, moving back his chair. "It is her letter, and of course she has a right to do what she pleases with it; if there is anything intended for other ears, she will tell it."

"Undoubtedly," replied the father, sneeringly; and the remainder of the meal was eaten in silence.

Flora, in the mean time, had retired to her room, which was, according to Lura's prophecy, directly over the one in which the family were now seated. For a long time she sat by the closed window, looking out through her blinding tears into the gathering twilight, and listened to the storm as it pattered against the panes, thinking—oh, of what was she not thinking? The past, with her happy innocent childhood, the present, with its perplexities, so new to her, the future, with its shadows—dark shadows—all rose up before her troubled view and joined in a chorus of desolation which rang through the inner chambers of her soul. Oh, the heart moanings, the feeble wails of unutterable anguish, which came up through the discordant thoughts that were ever intruding themselves upon the lonely orphan's existence! No mother's bosom where the weary head could rest, no mother's hand to wipe away the bitter, scalding tears, no mother's voice to speak peace to the troubled waters that rose, with angry billows, ready to destroy!

"No mother—no mother!" Those dirge-like words echo through the overhanging vault of the clouded sky, and the sunbeams die away.

Flora wept. Bitter tears will be wrung from the crushed and bleeding heart, but God forbid that the hand that writes

these pages, or yours, dear reader, should ever be seared by such scalding drops of anguish as the orphan's tears. The clouds, however, will pass away, for a Father's hand shall scatter them; and Flora wiped the tears from her eyes and broke the seal of the letter which she held in her hand. A smile soon danced upon her troubled face as she read the words breathing affection and an earnest solicitude for her happiness, mingling such bright hopes for the future and proffering joys for her every-day life. Then came the last page, and a sigh of regret escaped her that she was so near the end.

"I have a little bit of news to tell you," she read, "which I have kept as the best wine for the last of the feast. This morning I received a letter from our mutual friend, the island missionary, in answer to the one which I sent back by the 'Fur Trader' on our voyage. He expresses much satisfaction to learn of your good fortune, as he chooses to term it—that your dear teacher was much distressed when you could not be found, but now joins with him in his rejoicings. Wehegan, the warrior to whom you plighted your early vows, but not your love, my fairy, is still alive, although badly wounded, and has confessed what I was before quite confident of—that it was his jealousy which prompted him to inform you that he was to leave the island that day, which he did not intend to, but hovered around the cliff as a spy upon my departure, believing that we would not separate forever without an exchange of farewells. If so, he had determined that both of us should fall victims to his rage.

"Dear fairy, here is a problem for your trusting heart: what power guided my ball through the darkness to perform its work with sufficient thoroughness to secure us a complete protection during our retreat? Not mine, assuredly. Perhaps your faith can answer the question.

"Pastor Hawes also encloses a small manuscript which you may like to have in your possession, and which might

prove of value to you. I send it herein, and advise you to put it carefully away.

“Be sure and write me next week, fairy, that I may receive your letter at Washington, whither I go to-morrow, and tell me if everybody is kind and gentle to you. Study diligently, for I have a more glorious prospect for your future than for you to return as a civilizer of your people.”

The manuscript enclosed by Edgerton was the certificate of the marriage by Christian ceremony of the supposed parents of Flora; this important document was duly signed by the officiating minister and attested by two competent witnesses. A paper that, however valuable in many instances, was, in the case of Flora, productive only of misery, shadowing in dark clouds many months of her life. But we anticipate, and must tell the story in its natural course.

Again the eyes wandered out into the storm, and busy thoughts were trooping about guideless through every nook and corner of her bewildered brain. Darkness had crept in at the window and shrouded everything in that little room with its thick folds when Lura entered, bearing a lamp and a napkin filled with a plentiful repast gathered from the remains of the evening meal.

“You are very thoughtful and kind, dear Lura; but really, I cannot eat.”

“You must. Beauty cannot live upon grief and fasting. I’ve tried them both, and a depreciating effect they have even upon such a face as mine. So just eat this one biscuit and this bit of chipped beef, and I’ll ensure your pretty face through this disgraceful storm.”

Flora complied smilingly with the urgent request, and really did good justice to the timely repast. After this the two girls seated themselves around the little table, with their books open before them, while Flora explained the day’s lessons to her greedy pupil.

Then a long silence ensued, devoted to the preparation of the morning tasks. The clock struck nine, and Flora com-

plaining of weariness and headache, proposed to retire. Still Lura studied on, her small eyes enlarging with renewed interest, and her cheeks glowing with excitement. Flora arranged herself for the night, turned from the pleasing spectacle before her, and knelt, an humble suppliant, at the Father's feet. The eyes of the enthusiastic student were suddenly raised from the page before her, and her clasped hands fell listlessly upon it. Every night since they had occupied that room together she had seen that figure robed in white bow silently before the invisible One, but to-night there seemed to be an unwonted halo of devotion around her.

"The heart, when peaceful and happy, sends up its tribute of praise; when sad and wretched—yes, when sad and wretched—a piteous entreaty for sympathy and relief. Why have I not thought of this before? Why so perseveringly contend with outward circumstances, and fight with feeble hands a foe my insufficient strength could never conquer?"

Thus Lura mused until the kneeling suppliant arose, her heart soothed and comforted by the influences of a whispered peace. Turning, Flora beheld the deep, thoughtful eyes fixed upon her.

"Good-night," she said, smilingly; "I retire early, and leave the whole field of knowledge clear to you. But do not roam too long over its rocks and briars, or you will become footsore, and then it will be my duty to turn ministering angel and feed your hungry mental nature with 'biscuit and chipped beef.'"

"My dear Flora, you have been more of a ministering angel to me than you perhaps will ever understand. My mind was starving, famishing, and you have been, and are feeding it. My soul was hungry; your precious example points to the place where it can obtain food, and it thanks you."

Flora threw her arms around her companion's neck, and kissed her burning cheek affectionately.

"Will you give me a place in your morning and evening petitions, Flora? I am hungry—very, very hungry."

"Ask for food, then, dear Lura, and it shall be abundantly given you."

"There is no angelic spirit to hover over me as over you, Flora. Ah! I could almost hear the rustling of her ethereal robes and the music of her unfolded wings as she stopped on her heavenly mission to catch the unspoken words of your prayer, and bear them away to the throne of answering mercy. Flora, who is your unseen guide? It must be the spirit of an angel mother. Something seemed to tell me so, as I sat here and looked upon you. Tell me about her. Was she beautiful as yourself? or did she leave you so long ago that you have forgotten her?"

Flora started, and her heart throbbed violently. This was a very unexpected turn to the conversation, and she knew not how to answer.

"No, Lura," she at last said; "my mother was not beautiful, and it is not many months since she entered the spirit-land. But I am not fully convinced as yet that departed souls are the media of communication between the Father of our spirits and ourselves, beautiful as the idea must ever be to the imaginative mind. We will talk more of this at some future time. Do not, Lura, lose the glimpse you have had of that source of supply from which the hungry soul can be abundantly fed. Ask, and such sustenance shall be given you. Good-night."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FATAL SECRET.

THE snow and rain long contended for the supremacy, but owing to the extreme youthfulness of stern-visaged winter, he was vanquished after a struggle, and the rain-storm at last pattered away victoriously, having the extensive field entirely to itself, and the silly winds laughed and capered through the dark, deserted streets, as they saw their competitor slowly retire. Yet, alas! how short-lived are all earthly rejoicings! The winds died away; the frost king strode forth silently and slowly; and when morning came, and the sun's ruddy face peeped forth from his curtained bed, he espied nature robed in a transparent, glittering coat of mail adorned with gems of various hues.

Flora, too, beheld the icy pavement, but with quite a different emotion. The sun could ride all day above them, but she must walk upon the glassy surface or stay at home, of which she had no intention; therefore she did not hesitate. She had often tripped with light and buoyant step over a surface quite as smooth, but the moccasins with which her feet were then covered were far preferable, as she soon had occasion to know, for this purpose, to her india-rubber shoes; yet she walked lightly and carefully forward, stopping now and then to enjoy a secret laugh, as she beheld the full-length portrait of some luckless pedestrian stretched upon the treacherous pavement, or performing without much show of elegance all the sliding back and forward steps of the most fashionable waltz or quadrille, until at length she found herself, much to her amazement, where her powers of locomotion proved utterly unavailing.

She had slipped from the walk down into a deep glassy trench which some workmen upon a building in the process of erection had excavated, and all her efforts to regain her former footing were fruitless. She stood still for a moment, her merriment rather abating, as she realized her awkward position and the unpleasant exposure which was inevitable, should any of her schoolmates, Kitty excepted, chance to come that way, when the sound of a voice addressing her made her start and look suddenly around :

“If you will avail yourself of this cane of mine, I think I can without difficulty assist you.”

Her eyes danced and sparkled with merriment; and forgetting her usual timidity, she laid hold of the proffered aid, and in a moment stood beside her unknown deliverer.

“This is being hooked out of a predicament very opportunely, for which, sir, you have many thanks,” she said, modestly, smothering her glee.

It was a manly face upon which she looked, as she uttered these words, and those were dark, bewitching eyes that gazed for an instant into her own.

“Will you not permit me to assist you a little farther?” he asked, proffering her his arm. “It is hardly safe for ladies to walk alone this morning.”

She took the arm so kindly offered, and soon found herself safely within the gate of the seminary yard. Again the dark eyes looked deep into hers with their peculiarly bewitching power, as she turned to thank him for his aid, and all day long the handsome face of the stranger seemed before her.

While Flora’s heart and brain—the two great elements of our nature, as some physiologist pleases to term them—were the theatre of a miniature combat, Lura was engaged with an unusual amount of household cares, as Mrs. Edwards and her eldest daughter entered the room occupied by the two girls and locked the door after them.

“I wouldn’t care anything about the letter,” whispered Lena, as the key was turned slowly and cautiously in the

lock, "if she hadn't so coolly thrown the subject aside after our last night's conversation, and never mentioned it this morning. But now I'm determined to see it. I presume it will be easy enough, unless she has it with her, for she hasn't locked a trunk since she has been here."

So saying, the mother and daughter stealthily crossed the room and approached the wardrobe, where the trunks were placed.

"'Pon my word, if this one isn't fastened!" whispered Lena, after vainly endeavoring to raise the lid; "it must be worth looking into after such unusual caution. But I have read somewhere that impediments only strengthen firm resolution, of which behold the proof positive;" and with a sardonic smile, she silently left the room. In a few moments she returned with a huge bundle of keys, and, after relocking the door, with a zeal which deserved a better cause than the contemptible operation in which she was engaged, key after key was tried, and the fair face grew more and more anxious, as each of them in turn refused to be just the one for the present emergency.

"Here is one," she exclaimed, at last, "which I believe would open it, if that little corner was off, and a few moments among the files and rubbish in the garret will make that all right."

"Fie, fie, Lena! let's give it up," said the mother, growing a little ashamed of her part in this affair; "it's not worth the trouble."

"You must have forgotten your former lessons," Lena replied, with a sneer, "but I have not. Go to your own room; and when I am ready, I will let you know."

The mother obeyed, and in less than half an hour the trunk was opened, and Lena, with glowing cheeks and eyes fired with excitement, held in her hands the anxiously coveted letter. Summoning her mother, she opened the prize with eager hands, and as she opened it the marriage certificate fell to the floor. While reading the letter, several

times she paused to vent her anger and disgust. The last line was finished, and she sat gazing into her mother's face. Mrs. Edwards was the first to recover, and called Lena's attention to the paper on the floor. This they slowly perused, and then there was a long pause of dismay at the revelations of Edgarton's feelings toward Flora, and of surprise at those of Flora's parentage. At last, the mother spoke:

"Put the letter and its *precious* enclosure back where you found them, and lock the trunk carefully."

Lena obeyed, muttering, as she did so,

"Well, I can scarcely believe my own senses. If this little upstart isn't nothing more nor less than an insignificant squaw! Just let her show any more of her impertinence around me, and I can make her feathers droop."

"And he proposes to love the low creature!" chimed in the mother. "This is great business. I wonder what Lady Anna will say, *if* she finds it out?"

"She shall; that's just it: I'll write to her. This will bring about a correspondence between us, and we can use it then as we choose;" and Lena passed from the room in high glee.

"I don't know about it just now," said the sager of the two; "I'll think it over. It isn't best to leap too hastily. You know we only took her into the house in order to insinuate ourselves, if possible, into the good graces of those who felt disposed to drop us because our position changed, and we must be careful not to defeat our purpose."

"But to think, mother, that she is an Indian girl, and, child as she is, was sworn to marry an Indian warrior. The thought frightens me. What if she should take it into her head some fatal night to remove our scalps?"

"I presume she has learned the art of doing it well," said her mother, smilingly.

"Still she does not look very ferocious. And who would have imagined her lineage?"

"Of French descent, truly! I wonder what will come of

it?" and thus the two talked together until the street door opened, and Flora entered.

"There she comes," exclaimed Lena. "I wonder if I can lock the great secret in my heart, and appear composed?"

"You must try, at least for the present. Edgerton must certainly have some reason for his strange conduct, and it is not for our interest just now to attempt any interference with it. But one thing is certain: the connecting link between him and this child of a beggarly and ignominious birth, be it what it may, must—yes, shall—be broken. We must keep silence for a few months; then the ocean will roll between them, and it will be very strange if the music of its boisterous waves, as Edgar would have it, does not suggest some efficient mode of action."

A peaceful happiness overspread the face of Flora, as she sat that day at dinner, all unconscious of the satirical looks that were certainly aimed at her. The clouds of the preceding night had been withdrawn, and the bright beams of youthful anticipation came silently down through the vista of future years, and shed a loving light upon her present. Beside her sat Lura, and during the last evening a sympathetic word of congeniality had been drawing more closely the two hearts together. Opposite sat the brother, whose winning smile of tenderness she knew ever beamed upon her; and notwithstanding the air of superiority in which he enveloped himself, she could not but prize and feel grateful for it.

The bright sunshine had melted away the icy covering of the walks, and Flora tripped lightly and easily back to the afternoon session; but when she passed the new building at the corner, she stopped a moment, as she thought of her morning's adventure, and secretly wondered who the dark-eyed stranger could be, and if he often passed that way.

Lura busied herself a few moments in the dining-room after the family had all left, and then started to go up to

her own apartment. On the stairway, much to her surprise, she encountered her brother, who had not yet, according to his usual practice, left the house.

"I declare, sis!" he exclaimed; "Miss Flora's beauty must be contagious. I never saw you look so well. Your eyes are sparkling with a new light, and your cheeks really bear a bloom that even Miss Lena must covet, and the old childhood smile has returned to your lips, I do declare! 'Pon my word, I believe I must bless this fair enchantress with my love. What say you, sis?"

"Not a bad idea, brother; she may diffuse some of her charming spirit into you."

"Well, well! it may be. But do you know that this cottage is to be honored by a social circle of the undisputed *élite* to-morrow evening?"

"Certainly I did not, although I might have known that something unusual was going on had I taken time to think about it."

"Yes, Black has the order for the cakes and confectionery; and I suppose it is to be a splendid affair, considering the small domain over which our fair priestess presides, and all, I understand, in honor of a rich cousin of Miss Fenn, Lena's twin star," he continued, ironically.

"Very well," said Lura, tripping up the stairs. "If Miss Flora's company and my own will add to the anticipated *fête*, no doubt we shall be informed of the fact."

The tranquil mind of the plain, thoughtful girl was not at all disturbed by this disclosure, and the afternoon passed quickly away. She had found a flowery field of pleasure, in which her willing feet were roaming. Alone she sat by the cool, bubbling spring that sent up its pure sweet waters from the hillside, and listened to its soft, enrapturing music, enchanted and spellbound. Sweet fancies play around the crystal fountains where the fair Aonian sisters lingered to sip the cooling draughts, and Lura wooed and won them to her embrace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

"**W**HERE is Flora?" asked Lena, as the family were seating themselves at the tea-table on the evening of the entertainment.

"Gone home with a friend to spend the evening," answered Lura, very calmly.

"Did she not know that we were to have company this evening?"

"How should she? You did not take the trouble to give her the information," answered Lura, with the same cool gravity.

"But you did?"

"You have apprised me of no such remarkable event in our history; upon what authority could I inform others?"

"Child," interrupted the mother, quickly, "your sarcasm is very provoking; how can you talk to your sister in that way?"

Lura continued sipping her tea, quite unmoved.

"The effect of that influence which is daily thrown around her by that unprincipled girl," remarked Lena. "I propose that they be immediately separated. Fury will become quite unmanageable, if she goes on at this rate."

Lura grew very pale for a moment, and her eyes flashed with anger and indignation; but recovering herself by a great effort, she recalled the retreating glow to her cheek and lips, and the steady calmness of her voice remained.

"Brother does not agree with you, I believe, in regard to

the character of that new influence which has for the last few months been thrown about me—do you?" she asked, turning toward him.

"No—most decidedly, no," he answered, with great emphasis. "My opinion is"—moving his chair—"that the influence of which you speak is a most powerful renovator of body and mind. Look, fair sister," he continued, pointing to Lura's beaming face; "did you ever behold brighter eyes or more blooming roses than those which now adorn that once pale cheek? 'Pon my word, Lura, I believe you will soon be the flower of our illustrious family—I do, indeed!"

"Undoubtedly," sneered the father, as the son arose, laughing, from the table.

Lena did not look at the face to which her brother had directed her attention, and it was well that she did not, for it was glowing with a merriment its owner did not care to conceal, and a look of conquest which one would naturally exhibit over a subdued foe was plainly discernible in every lineament. Very quietly she attended to her evening duties below, then retired to her little room above, locked the door and began her studies. Now and then she was interrupted by the unusual sound of silver and plate in the dining-room; but stopping her ears, she studied on. Then came the noise of carriage-wheels at the gate, the sound of mingling voices in the hall below, loud talk and laughter upon the stairs, and again all was still. A look of annoyance passed over the student's face, but it was soon gone, in the interest she felt in the subject before her.

Ten o'clock came. She heard the deep tones of the church-bell proclaim the hour, and she knew that Flora would soon return. A feeling of loneliness for the first time stole over her; and closing her book, she began to listen for the familiar footsteps upon the stairs.

Nearly an hour passed away, during which time a merry

chorus of voices, mingling with the constant din of active spoons, glass and plate, fell like strange music upon the ears of the solitary girl, and a secret wonder began to fill her mind as to the cause of this very remarkable entertainment. But another carriage stopped at the cottage gate, and soon Flora entered the hall door. Lura had forgotten her impatience in the thoughts that came crowding upon her mind, and did not move until she heard Flora vainly endeavoring to enter.

Rising at once, she unlocked the door and threw her arms around Flora's neck, with an apology and a merry welcome upon her lips, when she perceived that Flora was very pale and trembled with excessive agitation.

"Why, my dear, what is it that troubles you? Are you ill? Let me take off your wrappings and get you something."

"No, no, my dear Lura; let me remain quiet for a few moments, and I shall soon recover," she answered, feebly.

Her companion complied, and taking a seat beside her, remained silent for some moments, yet without removing her eyes from the troubled face of her friend, who, she was very sure, was not suffering from any physical ailment, but was rather overpowered by some great mental suffering.

Soon the burning tears began rolling down Flora's cheeks, and her whole frame shook with emotion.

"Dear Flora, do not condemn me to silence," Lura plaintively pleaded; "I cannot endure to see you in such distress without endeavoring to relieve you. Let me share your trouble, as you have shared mine, and made me happy in so doing. Perhaps I too, in turn, may remove some part of your griefs. Oh, let me try. Confide in me, your humble friend, who owes you more than a whole lifetime of devotedness can repay."

Lura pressed the little trembling hand to her lips with such true affection that Flora raised her streaming eyes to

her face with unconcealed thankfulness. At last she spoke.

"Lura," she asked, with trembling voice, "will you always love me? Though bitter tongues should stigmatize my name, will you still always be my friend—my true, unflinching friend?"

"Do you doubt me, Flora? Oh, that would be agony indeed! Do you not remember that I once told you that in my heart was a sealed fountain of love, and that if some gentle hand of affection should remove the barrier it would flow forth with an overwhelming force? Your hand has performed that work, and the gushing waters have carried away much that was unnatural and impure in my heart, while its sweet music has brought new hopes, new desires, to my before aimless life, changing my whole nature, converting the barren ground into a blooming paradise. Can I cease to love one who has performed such a work of regeneration in my sluggish soul? Do not think me such a wretch. But tell me what troubles you; and if necessary, I will remove it by the sacrifice of all my anticipated joys and my present blessings."

Flora was greatly moved by this outburst of affection and sympathy, and, laying her head upon Lura's shoulder, wept anew.

"Lura," she said, at last, after stifling her emotion, "I thank you warmly; and in return for the love you have lavished upon me, I will in a moment tell you the cause of my distress. I entered the house this evening with a heart light and joyous, for I had spent a very pleasant evening with Kitty Lane and her most excellent mother. As I closed the hall door I heard a voice issue from the parlor that seemed familiar to me, although I had heard it but once before: it was that of a gentleman who kindly rendered me some assistance that icy morning while on my way to school. I observed that he was engaged in a spirited con-

versation with a lady, and stood apart from the rest of the company. I feared lest they might notice me, as I passed up the stairs, and I stole slowly and silently along in the shadows, when, much to my astonishment, I found that the encounter of which I have been speaking formed the subject of their conversation. Then my own name was mentioned, and I stopped to listen. Oh, what evil power possessed me? I would that I had never heard those cruel words that burned into my very soul! Oh, why am I torn from my lowly home? Why was I doomed to a life so full of thorns—so full of cruel bitterness and woe? Better that I had died on the unhappy bosom which pillowed my infant head, happy then in the ignorance of my own shame, my utter nothingness, than to be thus thrust from my darkened life into the blazing light of worldly wisdom and civilization!" and she raised her hands in fervent petition. "Oh for patience—for resignation! Ah, yes! how much patience we need while contending with ourselves and the world!"

"Do not talk so, dear Flora; I know well whose tongue has so poisoned your peace. But banish the hateful subject from your mind. Let this room be our fair Utopia, sacred to happiness and peace. What do I care where your life began—whether in the South Sea islands or among the cold-hearted Hottentots? You are all the world to me now, and birth and lineage could no more diminish my love than a crowned cannibal could create it."

"Noble girl! This little room shall indeed be our city of refuge. Here at least we will dismiss the world, and live in a sphere of our own creation."

Thus did true love and sympathy bind up the wounded heart, wipe away the tears of sorrow, and bring back to the darkened chambers of grief the blessed sunshine of hope and happiness. And thus will it ever. Thrice blessed is this heavenly mission which God has given to women, and fallen

indeed must that nature be which not only turns away from these kind offices, but administers the dregs of malice and discontent in place of the oil of gladness which it is her high privilege to pour into the lacerated bosom.

Many months passed away, and the chamber that night consecrated had not been once violated. Yet those two hearts, which were as closely united as ever, had often been sad and weary, and many times tears had fallen upon the pillow where the aching head was resting, hid from the other's view by the darkness of the midnight hour.

All, however, had not been darkness. Many bright spots had been scattered along the way, and of all these the brightest to Flora were the pleasant hours spent with Kitty Lane and her mother in their elegant home. Here she could throw aside the mantle of indifference with which she endeavored to shield her sensitiveness from the bitter, cruel words of scorn and irony which were almost daily cast at her, and freely open her heart, with all its joys and sorrows, to these much loved ones. Here, too, she had often met the young seamstress whose pale, sorrowful face had so much interested her at their first meeting.

One evening the patient Anna, although weary from many hours of toil, had been obliged to stay somewhat later than usual to finish some work, and the two girls proposed to accompany her home. A crimson flush passed over the face, and a tear for a moment glittered in the calm blue eye, but Kitty's fond caress, as she whispered, "We just want to take a walk, and thought you would like to have us keep the whales from swallowing you," brought a smile to her lips, and they soon started off, with many injunctions from Mrs. Lane to be sure and hurry back before it grew dark.

It was a calm, quiet evening in early summer, when the broad, clear sky is bluest and the foliage assumes its deepest hue of green, when the bird lingers long in the tree-tops and sings his sweetest songs to woo his tender bride to his covert-

home, and the young flowers raise their modest heads to sport a while with the passing breeze before they fold their fragrant leaves in sleep.

"Isn't this lovely?" exclaimed Flora. "Somehow, I seem to be in two places at the same time—here in this pleasant city, and yet far away on the beach of a distant isle, where I have so often stood and listened to the pensive waves that talked to me of other shores where they had murmured their song of freedom, and of other scenes over which was drawn the same blue arch that shut me in. Oh, I have listened, enchanted, until my soul seemed to have forsaken its prison-house, and I beheld it on the crest of some receding wave which was bearing it far, far away."

"What a strange girl you are!" said Kitty. "You really look as though you believed every word you have been saying. But the waves don't talk—you know they don't, you bewildered enthusiast! What makes you say that they do?"

"Why, Kitty! did you never dream?"

"Oh, certainly. You were dreaming, then? I understand now how the waves could talk; for only a few nights ago I dreamed that my Spanish Congo sang Juliet for me, because I told him to."

"Yes, but I dream with my eyes open; don't you, Miss Anna?"

"Oh yes, very often, but not as I used to; dread realities chase day-dreams away. But I can understand how such an evening as this brings back happy days that crowding events had wellnigh covered up, for sunny hours often come to me from the past to cheer my loneliness, recalled by some tiny flower or sweet familiar note in a little birdling's song."

"Are you very lonely?" asked Flora, sympathetically.

"No; I did not mean that. As long as my precious mother lives to bless me, I can never be lonely."

They had reached the suburbs of the city, and the evening shadows were deepening around the small cottages that nestled at the foot of Mount Ida.

"I cannot take you farther," Anna said, abruptly; "I fear it will be dark before you can get home. See," she said, pointing to a small white cottage standing upon the hillside; "there is my home, and I shall not be 'swallowed' before I reach it. So hasten back, lest there should be anxiety about you."

"May I not go home with you some night?" whispered Flora, at parting.

"If it will give you pleasure," was the answer; and quiet and thoughtful, Flora walked briskly back by the side of her vivacious friend, and the two soon reached their respective homes.

CHAPTER XIX.

ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE.

WEDNESDAY and Saturday afternoons were precious seasons to Flora. Being free from all school duties after two o'clock, the remaining hours were spent with Lura in their little room, or together they would climb the rugged ascent of Mount Ida, whose smooth grasses and declivities had been marred by the hand of progress, but upon whose summit bright green fields stretched along far and wide, while the woodlands offered a cool, inviting retreat to all who were desirous of their silent shade. Here the two friends would sit for hours upon the precipitous edge of the deep ravine where the merry, noisy stream leaped over the craggy rocks below, laughing and sporting in its onward course, filling the air with its inspiring music and lulling the weary mind to repose by the song of its own restlessness.

Thither, one hot sultry afternoon in June, they had strayed, and were seated beneath a clump of widespreading trees, intently and silently listening to Nature's various voices that penetrated the greenwood shade. Flora had been engaged in sketching, her usual practice during these excursions; but laying her paper and pencil aside, she was resting her head upon her hand, and sat gazing listlessly down into the eddying, bubbling waters some distance below her. Lura was eagerly reading, her whole mind absorbed with the glorious words of Milton, who, although dead, still speaks to the appreciative mind with burning eloquence; and roaming as she was in the unbounded labyrinth of thought, she was quite unconscious of the deep reverie into which her companion had fallen.

Suddenly there arose upon the stillness the soft, warbling of a mournful heart, which reverberated upon the motionless air, as though Memory's fingers were slowly straying over the silver strings of Affection's lyre, calling up its sweetest notes that had long remained silent, though the chords had never been unstrung. Flora warbled on. It was one of those wild native songs she had learned in her early childhood, and had often sung with the birds in those distant woods. She had a rich, clear voice, full of melody and sweetness; and as its soft cadence, so heavily laden with other days, brought back scene after scene of bygone years, it sank and rose in pleasing harmony with her waking memories.

Lura had been recalled by those sweet tones from the flowery gardens of poesy in which she had been abstractedly wandering, and with closed book she sat and listened to the wild music that rang in her ear. The voice ceased; and as its soft echoes died away, Flora raised her eyes and beheld directly opposite to them, on the other side of the deep ravine, a gentleman, standing leaning against the trunk of a tree, looking steadily at them. Flora started, and hastily throwing her dark straw hat upon her head, was about rising, when the intruder, waving his hand, suddenly disappeared.

"I am so glad he has gone," said Lura, pettishly, "for I want to finish 'Paradise Lost' before we go. But you must not sing any more, or you will call up the spirits that haunt those gray old rocks yonder. Where did you learn that wild, mysterious song? I never imagined anything like it—yet how beautiful! You must sing it again for me some time, as it just suits me."

"Sing it, Lura? I was not singing. It was the wail of departed years that came sobbing up through my pierced heart. No, I was not singing," she continued, musingly; "I was sighing, sighing."

Flora again threw aside her hat, and resuming her paper

and pencil, was soon absorbed in her pleasing task, and Lura began to read again with renewed interest. A full half-hour passed away in silence, when the sinking sun sent his silvery rays through the thick foliage and fell upon the open book.

"See," said Lura, suddenly, rising; "it is almost sundown. How late we have stayed! Tea will be over before we reach home if we do not hurry; and an edict may be interposed between myself and these delightful hours. But it will soon be over. I have worn the galling yoke for many years, but I can almost see it lying at my feet. Oh, how I long to break it!" she exclaimed, as with buoyant step they bounded away.

Their homeward path wound around by the moss-covered walls of the old cemetery, and the tall, white marble columns were decked with a halo of glory by departing day.

"Our next visit," said Flora, in passing, "must be to this silent city of the dead. I would like so much to walk among these tottering monuments of long ago, and read the blurred inscriptions, relics of a love whose burning fires have been extinguished by a common hand, that of relentless Death. Ah, what a world this is! love and hatred woven together upon the same hearthstone, and their smouldering ashes mingle. Hark!" she exclaimed, suddenly, stopping to listen; "did you not hear a groan, as from some one in distress? There it is again!"

"Oh, let us hurry on," ejaculated Lura, trembling; "it will be very late before we reach home."

"No, Lura; I am sure that some one is near us, in trouble. I cannot leave so. Yes, there it is again;" and with a single bound she stood upon the moss-covered wall and was looking down upon the other side. She waited but a moment, then, springing down, vanished from her companion's sight.

Lura was bewildered. She was not naturally timid, but the hour and the place, alone by the slumbering dead,

seemed to fill her mind with a fearful awe, and she stood for a moment irresolute, undetermined whether to follow her more courageous friend or await her return. It was only for a moment, for the sound of her own name uttered by Flora aroused her, and cautiously she clambered up the wall.

"Come to me, Lura; here is a poor child almost dead, I believe, for she will not speak to me."

"I ain't 'most dead," murmured the child. "I wish I was, for then I could go to my mother."

"Is your mother lying here?" asked Flora, very tenderly, endeavoring to raise her from the ground.

"Yes, yes! See," she exclaimed, raising herself just enough to disclose a deep excavation in the earth beneath her; "I am going to dig down where she is. Then I'll die and be with her."

The two girls were deeply moved, and would have reasoned with the little mourner, but the sun was sinking fast behind the hills, and both were very anxious to leave a spot where so many gloomy associations surrounded them, before the twilight shadows should shed an additional gloom upon the place.

"Come, you must go with us," said Lura, almost impatiently. "Tell us where your home is, and we will take you to it."

"Home!" shrieked the child. "I haven't any home. Those great ugly men came and locked the door, and carried away the key, and said I must go and live with Mrs. Powel. But I won't live with her; she isn't good, and whips me because I won't call her mother. Oh, dear mother, let me come to you! oh, let me come to you!" she cried, throwing her arms over the grave and sobbing as though her little heart would break.

Flora wept. It was pitiful to see the look of utter despair in that pale, haggard face, and to listen to those agonizing exclamations that came ebbing up from that young heart.

"Poor child!" she said, laying her hand soothingly upon her disordered hair; "how long have you been here?"

"Two long, dark nights. But I wasn't afraid, for she came last night and kissed me just as she used to, and called me her poor child of sorrow, and I am going to stay here, for she will come again."

"If your poor mother, who sleeps so silently down there in that grave, could speak to you, she would tell you to go with us, and not stay out here alone, for it will make you sick."

"Would she?" said the child, raising her head and looking thoughtfully into the face beside her.

"I am quite sure she would," said Flora.

The right chord had been touched. The child arose to her feet, and would have fallen had not Flora caught her.

"You are ill, poor child! What can I do with you?"

She hesitated but an instant, then, clasping the frail form in her arms, walked steadily away.

"You do not intend to carry that child!" said Lura, much surprised.

"A little way. Perhaps she can walk by and by."

Lura offered to relieve her of her burden, but she refused, and they hurried on. As she looked into the little haggard face that lay so quietly upon her bosom, and saw the wild glare of her dark, brilliant eyes, she forgot her weariness, and walked silently and thoughtfully along.

"Let me get down," said the feeble voice at length, and Flora felt for the first time that her strength was not sufficient for the burden which she had assumed.

"What shall you do with her?" asked Lura, as they reached the city. "It is so late that we cannot find her home to-night."

"No, I shall take her home with me, give her my supper, and make her a bed in my own room."

Lura did not speak. A fearful foreboding had taken

possession of her mind. It might, however, be but timidity, a nervous shrinking away from every unpleasant conflict, which had become habitual to her from the combined circumstances of years, and she vainly endeavored to drive it from her. But when at last the bright light glared at them from the window of the cottage, its brilliant rays seemed to whisper a caution, and Lura would gladly have framed some pretext to dissuade Flora from her purpose. She could invent none, however, and they entered the gate and approached the front door. It was locked, and Lura rang the bell. The summons was soon answered by Miss Lena, who appeared with a frown upon her face which she intended should be perfectly overwhelming.

"You can go around to the kitchen the next time you stay out as late as this," she said, as she opened the door. "What, in the name of all that's honorable, have you got there?" she continued, as Flora advanced with the trembling child.

"A little girl we found in the cemetery, and I shall keep her to-night, as it is too late now to think of finding her home."

"Not here," exclaimed Lena, stamping her foot with rage. "No, indeed! It's quite enough to be obliged to harbor one beggar beneath our roof, without being forced to open our doors to every one that chooses to knock for admittance."

"Lena," exclaimed Lura, stepping between her and the object of her rage, "speak not those words again, or as truly as English blood courses in my veins, you shall repent it."

Lena grew very pale, and for a moment stood irresolute before this unexpected opposition from one who a few months before would have withered beneath her scorching anger in silence.

"I have said it," she exclaimed, her teeth firmly set, "and your impudent threat does not cause me to swerve

in the least. Away with the ragged pauper; she shall not enter this house. It has been already too long contaminated. If Charles Edgerton chooses to descend from his present position into the very slough of plebeianism, he can do so. I will not!"

"I have no words to bandy with you," Lura remarked; and, turning to her mother, who had entered the hall in time to hear Lena's last words, she continued, "but I assure you, mother, that if ample apology is not offered to Flora for this cruel and wicked language, I will leave my house to-morrow, and never while I live shall these feet cross the threshold of this house, where I have spent so many miserable years."

The mother stood aghast. Could this be Phelura, the meek and humble child?

Lura turned a moment, as she paused, to look at Flora, when, to her great astonishment, she was nowhere to be seen. Quick as thought she darted down the gravel walk to the street, ran first one way, then the other, but nothing could be seen of her fugitive friend.

It was quite dark; and trembling with fear and anxiety, Lura returned to the house after a half-hour's fruitless search, and retired to her own room. It was no idle threat which she had made, and oh, how her burdened heart did ache as she threw herself upon the bed! Where was Flora? She did not fear for her, for well she knew that those holy principles which pervaded her religious life encircled her as the coat of mail the strong man, and that their power was sufficient for the ills that entwined her. But whither had she fled, bearing with her the unknown child? Oh, how desolate appeared that little room, so long ago dedicated to "peace and love"! The fair "Utopia" had been invaded, and peace had fled for ever—yes, for ever—and for the first time she wept as the thoughts of her own desolation crowded chokingly upon her.

Flora had started back as the fury of Lena's anger met

her; but when Lura stepped between them, and the darkness hid her from sight, she caught the trembling child in her arms and darted down the path which led to the gate that opened into the alley in the rear of the house. She then ran hastily along until she reached the open street, when she placed the child upon the pavement, and taking hold of her hand, bade her haste as fast as possible. Ten minutes' walk brought her to the elegant home of her particular friend, Kitty Lane. She did not stop to meditate, as she glanced at the dark building, which seemed to look frowningly down upon her, or she might have faltered in her purpose. Unclosing the heavy gate, she passed into the yard, and thence on to the kitchen door. She was greeted with inquiring looks, as she entered, but she heeded them not, and hurriedly placing the little girl in a chair, turned to a black servant, with whom she knew herself to be a great favorite, and asked her to attend to the poor child for a moment while she went to see Mrs. Lane.

"Sartinly I will, miss; but where did you get the wee bit?"

Flora, saying she would tell her by and by, darted away.

The child had not spoken, and the sage old Fanny stood looking at her with a perplexed air.

"Now, I've sartin seen that wee thing afore," she said, at last, scratching her head, as if to call up slumbering recollections—"just as sartin as I live. Oh, massy sakes!" she exclaimed, springing forward as fast as her aged limbs would permit. "Biddy, Biddy!" she called, with a loud voice, although that remarkable person was in the same room. "Do see! The child is dying!"

"She's fainted, that's all," said the rotund Biddy, approaching slowly and with a movement of great superiority. But Fanny had laid the child gently upon the floor, and applied some camphor, taken from a little bottle which she always carried in her roomy pocket, for the reason, as she asserted, that "life was so onsartin," and in response to her

active exertions the little sufferer soon moaned as in a troubled sleep, and finally opened her eyes and looked wildly about her.

In the meantime, Flora had ascended to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Lane sat, apparently alone, by the centre-table, reading. Flora stealthily approached her, threw her arms affectionately about her neck, and kissed the beautiful face that was turned quickly toward her.

"Ah! *ma belle* Flora," she exclaimed, "how you startled me! What has brought you out to-night? I thought you were always so busy that I could never have this pleasure."

Flora had hesitated, not knowing how to commence the story of which her heart was so full. At last she whispered, "My dear friend, I am in trouble, and had nowhere to go but to you." Here her voice failed her, and big tears choked her utterance.

"*Ma belle petite*," said Mrs. Lane, caressing the weeping girl, who still clung about her neck, "tell me all that perplexes you. How dare any one give you trouble, my lovely one?"

Flora dried her tears, and told her of her afternoon's ramble, and of the poor little ragged child that had been the unconscious cause of her present annoyance. "And oh," she exclaimed, raising her voice with the excitement she was powerless to control, "she told me their house had long been contaminated by the presence of a beggar, and God knows this to be untrue. I never begged, neither did I seek the shelter of their roof. But I do come to you to-night, begging, not for myself, but for this suffering child."

"Where is she?" said Mrs. Lane, arousing herself to a full consciousness of the circumstances.

"I left her in the kitchen with black Fanny while I came to see you."

"Let us go to her at once;" and she followed Flora from the room.

During this scene two gentlemen were sitting at the farther end of the spacious apartment in the shadow of a bay-window which opened upon the balcony. Flora had not perceived them.

"A fine tableau," said Mr. Lane, as the ladies disappeared.

"The finest I ever witnessed. But the dark-eyed beauty seemed in trouble, and I should judge from the few words that reached my ear that some one had been very cruel to her."

"Yes," said Mr. Lane, musingly, "she boards with the Edwards', and I never liked the overbearing spirit they always seem to manifest. Yet I know little of them, and have very little desire to know more."

His companion was silent. Mr. Lewis Fenn had been quite a frequent visitor at the cottage since the entertainment, and had at least been flattered, if not much pleased, by the particular attention shown him on all occasions. He thought Miss Lena very pretty, and her smile particularly winning, while her amiability was certainly undeniable. She had often spoken of "her poor dear sister, who pertinaciously shrank from all society on account of her plain face," with actual tears dimming her mild blue eyes. "And Flora, too, would certainly kill herself by her devotion to study." "No doubt," she said, at one time, while dilating at length upon the subject, "she would gladly overcome by education the repugnance of society in regard to her parentage. I really pity her."

How could so many delectable sweets emanate from a bitter fountain? The young man could not understand it, yet he would not for this reason willfully close his eyes and say that he would not believe it. Ah, no! stubborn facts, like nauseous pills, sometimes must be swallowed; and although disagreeable at first, they are almost always sure to benefit the sufferer.

CHAPTER XX.

FOR EVER GONE.

"I KNOW dat chile jes like a book," said Aunt Fanny, as she was universally called, upon entering the room next morning where the little sufferer lay tossing upon her bed.

"Where did you know her, aunty?" asked Flora, who was sitting beside her, holding the little fevered hands in her own.

"Why, I seen Mrs. Powel thrashin' her most drefful t'other day, when I was gwine down to see Jim Brown's wife. I heard her screams, so I jes looked over de fence, and dat face looked at me jes as it do now—so pitiful like; I couldn't stan it, and so I got away quick, and when I came back I took another street."

"Poor child! how she has suffered! But is this all you know about her?"

"Oh, sartin; I never seed her 'fore nor since. But I knowed her as soon as I sot my eyes on her, but I wasn't quite sure till now."

Mrs. Lane entered soon after, and seated herself by Flora.

"You may leave us, Fanny, for a few moments; then I shall want you to sit by the child while this dear girl takes a little rest."

Aunt Fanny obeyed, and the two were alone with the insensible child.

"I want to talk with you a few moments," said the lady, affectionately, taking the hand of Flora; "may I?"

"Certainly, my dear friend; I shall be pleased to hear whatever you may have to say."

"And be pleased also to do whatever I may wish?"

"If I can."

"Well, you can, my pretty one; so I may be sure that you will."

Flora smiled, but did not answer.

"My husband and myself have been talking over your unjust treatment, and have concluded that you must not put yourself in the way of another insult by going back into the Edwards family, but that you must stay with us. Kitty will be so happy to have you for a companion, and I shall enjoy your society so much. I love you, dear girl. You seem a woman to me, and have found a cosy place in my heart. Now for a fulfillment of your promise;" and she drew her toward her, and kissed her forehead. "I claim it. Kitty does not know that you are here, and I only wait for your word to go and tell her all."

"Oh, I cannot, I cannot," said Flora, covering her face with her hands and weeping bitterly.

"You cannot? what does this mean? I thought to make you happy, and here you are weeping as if your heart would break. Tell me, Flora, why you cannot. Would you not be happy with us? Ah! I thought you loved me, Flora," she said, much moved.

"Oh, I do love you, more than words can tell," sobbed the weeping girl; "but I have learned a lesson during the last twelve hours which I never can forget. I thank you from the fullness of my orphan heart for your kind offer, and will so far accept it as to remain with you until this poor child recovers or shall need my care no longer. Then, if it be possible, I will find some place where I can work for my board, or give up the school and seek some means of livelihood."

"Pardon me," said Mrs. Lane, taking her hand, "but I had heard that a rich relation of the Edwards family had

brought you here for the purpose of giving you an education. Was I misinformed?"

Flora did not speak at first. Her thoughts were busily hurrying over the last few months, and something about its many incidents seemed mysterious to her now. She had never received but one letter from him, which she had answered as directed, and Lena, some weeks before, had told her that she had just heard from Edgarton, who was about to take a tour through Scotland in company with his mother and a Lady Eveline, to whom he was betrothed. Strange she had not thought more of it at the time, but the dreadful reality had come to her now. Yes, if he had not forgotten, he had at least grown tired of, her very soon—much sooner than she had expected.

"It is not idle curiosity which prompts the inquiry," said Mrs. Lane, interrupting her reverie; "but I would like to do you good."

"I know it," said Flora, "and can trust you. All you have heard, no doubt, is true. I never should have been here, had it not been for Sir Charles Edgarton. But things have changed, and I must now act for myself."

Flora arose to administer something to the sick child, who was rolling from side to side and throwing her little arms about in a wild delirium of fever.

"Oh, it is hard," she said, "to see the innocent suffer, and have no power to relieve them."

"What did the doctor say of her this morning?" asked Mrs. Lane.

"That he could not positively determine her case at his first visit, but that he should not be surprised if her sufferings were soon over. How piteously she calls upon her mother! and how that mother must have struggled with the fell destroyer when she knew that her helpless child would be left alone to fight with puny hands the angry billows of life!"

"You talk strangely. Have your few years been so full

of sad experience that it has changed you thus early into a sage philosopher? What do you know of the angry billows of which you so wisely speak? I tell you, my pretty one, there is more sunshine in life than storm and tempests, if we do not convert every little mischievous gale into a whirlwind. But come, I haven't on my Solomon's cap this morning, and I want you to tell me a little more about yourself. Why did you say that things had changed, and that you must seek some way of gaining a livelihood? I have lived longer than you, *ma belle*, and perhaps know more of changing human nature than yourself. If I can help you, I am anxious to do so."

"You are very kind, and there is no one else—not even Lura—in whom I would confide so much. Sir Charles was very kind," she continued, blushing deeply, "and provided everything I could wish, and much more than I had any idea I should need, making arrangements, as he told me, for the payment of all my school bills during the next four years before he left. He promised to write me very often, and exacted a promise from me that I would answer every letter promptly, and assured me that at the termination of my school duties he would return."

"Well, this is all fair. Has he kept his part of the contract thus far?"

"I have received but one letter, and that I answered months ago."

"Strange! But I will think of this, Flora. I cannot make up my mind that the programme of your eventful history is to be so suddenly changed as you seem to suppose. Man is indeed fickle, but not more so, according to my estimate of character, than many a one of our own sex. I can see no adequate reason in this case which should bring about such a sudden revolution in so generous a heart. Do not be unhappy, *ma belle*; all will yet be right. There is the breakfast-bell. I will send Fanny to you; then you must come and join us below."

So saying, she affectionately patted the cheek of the blushing girl, and glided from the room.

"Ah! how little she knows of the dark shadowy path on which my feet must travel! A petted child of fortune, loving and beloved, happy in the sunshine of prosperity in which she has ever basked, how can she penetrate the gloom which ever surrounds my lonely existence?"

Aunt Fanny entered; and once more bathing the hot burning brow of the sick child, she turned to leave, when she hesitated, as she reached the door, and stopping, said, "Aunty, where does this Mrs. Powel live of whom you spoke a short time ago?"

"Why, 'way down on Sixth street, jes' few doors this side of Jim Brown's. But ye's ain't gwine to go dar, Miss Flora?"

"Yes, I am going immediately after breakfast."

"Oh, massy! I wouldn't be hired. She's got such an awful red head, and looks jes like a picter I's seen in a book."

Laughingly Flora assured her that red heads had no special horror for her, and left the room.

Within an hour afterward Flora and Kitty were on their way to Mrs. Powel's. It was a beautiful morning, and the cool, fresh breeze fanned them pleasantly, as they walked briskly on beneath the shadows of the rich green trees and the palatial walls that sheltered them from the warm rays of the summer sun. Flora was very silent during their rapid walk, for a cloud drooped over her young spirits and shut out the cheering light which at times looked invitingly upon her from the future.

"Well," said Kitty, as they had almost reached their destination, "you haven't said anything but 'yes' and 'no' since we started. It is tiresome for me to do all the talking."

"Is it?" said Flora, endeavoring to arouse herself. "I humbly beg your pardon for my silence; but I have no

doubt you will hear talking enough soon, if Aunt Fanny's predictions are fulfilled."

"What shall you say to her? For my part, I feel afraid of that luminous top-knot. There may be a contagious fever lurking in it," said Kitty, with a hearty laugh, in which Flora joined, at the same time assuring her there was no danger if she did not open her mouth.

"That's she, I'll wager my new shoes," said Kitty, with an assumed timidity, as they beheld before them a short, fat, red-faced woman emerging from a low hovel with a broom in her hands. "Yes, for I see the red locks sticking out beyond her green sun-bonnet. That's she, and that broomstick looks to me like a portentous weapon."

"Good-morning," said Flora, mildly, as they approached her.

The green sun-bonnet was raised to an angle of about forty-five degrees, while a pair of dark, piercing eyes glared at her from beneath.

"Is this Mrs. Powel?"

"That's my name," she responded, without moving her eyes.

"I came to inquire about a little girl who was with you a few days since."

"I don't know anything about the girl; and what is more, I don't want to," she replied, tartly, and her broom commenced its morning task with a vigor that seemed intended to silence all further attempts at conversation.

"A perfect Juno in stateliness and dignity," whispered Kitty, merrily.

Flora suppressed her rising mirth, and dodging the volumes of dust that came whirling toward her, again said,

"I thought perhaps you might like to hear of her, as I could give you some important information. But as you do not, perhaps you will tell me her name."

This aroused her curiosity; and suspending her active duties, the green bonnet once more pointed in the direc-

tion of the speaker, and a volley of glances was again fired at her.

"Oh yes, I'll tell you her name. It's Clara Saunders, and her mother died in that next house there three weeks ago; and as I have no children, I promised to take the willful child as my own, but I couldn't do anything with her; and when she ran away from me a few days ago, I made up my mind she might stay away—I'd have nothing more to do with her, neither will I."

"Have you any clothing in your possession which belongs to her?"

"Well, yes; there's a small trunk here with a few things in it; but she didn't have much, for her mother was poor and proud—proud as Lucifer, too, I tell you."

Flora told her she would send for the trunk, and was about turning away, when the woman exclaimed,

"Look here! You didn't tell me what you knew about her."

Flora laughed. Kitty gave her arm a very uncomfortable pinch.

"I thought I would not trouble you with information which you do not care to hear," she answered, with provoking gravity.

The broom made two or three nervous movements, then settled down again.

"Tell me what you know about her," was the abrupt demand.

"Certainly, if you wish it. I found her yesterday prostrated with exhaustion on her mother's grave, and brought her home with me. She is now lying dangerously ill at the house of a friend, caused, as the physician informed me, by excitement and exposure."

"Humph!" was the only reply Flora heard; and as the broom once more commenced its rapid motions, the two girls hastened away.

"What made you tell anything?" said Kitty, when they

were again out of hearing distance. "I would have let her die with a famishing curiosity. No doubt, in such a case, the world would have canonized your name for the deed."

"Oh, fie, Kitty! She is not the worst specimen of female depravity with which I have come in contact, for she has at least one recommendation to favor, and that is her naked depravity. She does not 'smile and smile, though a villain still,' piercing the sensitive heart with a poisoned barb, coated over with honeyed words, as the angler hides the pointed hook beneath the tempting bait. Such, Kitty, I have learned to dread. But there is no trouble with the woman we have just left; the hook is bare, and we can swim sportively around it."

That evening Flora fully intended to return to the cottage for a short time, and prepare her trunks for their removal. The poor sick Clara, however, moaned so piteously, as she tossed upon her bed, that she could not leave her, but stood untiringly beside her for hours, bathing the parched lips and brow, and cooling the fevered limbs, until she had the satisfaction of seeing the little sufferer sink into a peaceful slumber.

"You have worked miracles," said the kind-hearted physician, as he beheld the patient quietly sleeping. "If we can keep the fever checked as it is now for twenty-four hours, I can promise the most favorable results."

"It shall be done," said Flora, resolutely; "I will not leave her during that time, nor relax my energies."

The physician smiled pleasantly upon her, as he retired, and Flora prepared herself for a long and tiresome vigil.

"It will kill you," said Mrs. Lane, who was vainly endeavoring to reason away her absurdity, as she termed it. "You look sick this minute."

"Did you never hear of deceitful looks?" said Flora, smilingly.

But Kitty declared that she would hide herself in the ceiling, and make hideous noises to frighten her off to bed.

“So listen; and if you hear a noise, just look aghast and run for your life.”

Flora engaged to do so if she was frightened, and then was left for the night. Then came the long, lonely hours which move so slowly and wearily away. But as her hands were constantly occupied in works of charity and mercy, her thoughts also became busy, and kept time with their restless motion. Ah! that precious keepsake which but a few months before had been so tenderly whispered in her ear and enshrined in her trusting heart as the guiding divinity of her earthly ambition! How could it be that in so short a time the casket could be shattered and the frail forget-me-not lie crushed and withering in the dust? Then that gentle look of tenderness, the farewell kiss, were they, too, wholly gone? Ah, no! A tear came ebbing up from the desolate heart, as from its most secret consecrated chamber, and echo answered, “No, no!” Then, as she knelt by the bed, there arose upon the midnight hour a fervent petition for strength, for power to rebuild her crumbled hopes, and to people the slender castle with pure and holy aspirations and humble desires. Then came the peaceful spirit of happiness and illumined all the darkness, driving away the grim shadow of discontent and filling her soul with thankfulness and praise.

“When the past is darkly clouded,
And the future thickly shrouded,
And the heart is faint and weary,
While life's path looks dull and dreary,
Turn from all these scenes away
To Him who kindly bids thee pray.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BIRDS FLOWN.

FLORA felt amply repaid when Dr. Hillman pronounced his patient very much better; and when, at last, the little sufferer opened her eyes and looked calmly upon her, with their wild vacant glare all gone, she felt a joy creeping into her heart that it had not known for many days.

"Let me relieve you for a little while," said a sweet, low voice close to her elbow, and Flora, turning, saw the pale young seamstress standing beside her. "You must be very weary, and need some rest. Mrs. Lane was coming, but a friend called, and she wished me to come in her place."

"You are very kind," said Flora; "and if you can sit here for half an hour, I will take a short walk."

Anna assenting, Flora left the room. She had an unpleasant task before her, and oh, how she wished it were performed! She soon reached the door of the cottage. She hesitated. How could she meet them? Yet her heart yearned for the warm sympathy and true affection of her one cherished friend within. How had Lura borne the separation? Thoughts like these pressed upon her mind, as with slow and anxious step she ascended to the door. It was locked. Without ringing the bell, as she at first intended, she quickly descended the steps and went around to the kitchen. All was silent.

She began to fear that the cottage was deserted, when a low, murmuring sound reached her ear. It proceeded from the faithful, kind-hearted servant girl, who was reverently bowed before a small crucifix which she held in her

hand, and engaged in chanting in monotonous tones her "Ave Maria" to the holy Virgin, whom she had been taught in her ignorance to adore. The girl, hearing a step upon the threshold, hastily sprang to her feet with loud exclamations of joy and surprise.

"Ah! ye's come to see a sorry day, Miss Flora," she exclaimed, rubbing her hands with great fervor. "A sorry day it was when they drove ye from this house."

"What is the matter, Mary?" asked Flora, calmly. "Does any one here grieve because I am away?"

"And didn't Miss Lura walk the floor all night, honey, when ye was gone? And last night didn't she take her clothes and lave her home kase ye's wasn't in it? Didn't she, honey?"

"Mary, has Lura gone?" exclaimed Flora, springing forward and grasping the toil-stained hand of the weeping Irish girl.

"Gone, is it ye say? As true as the howly Virgin hears and answers prayers, she left last night; and here's a little paper she tould me give ye."

Flora snatched the paper from her hand eagerly, and breaking the seal, read as follows:

"DARLING FLORA: The yoke is broken. I step from beneath this roof to-night, never again to return, until I enter bearing some other appellation than the menial 'Fury.' I shall not lose you; we shall meet again. LURA."

Flora was much excited; but waiting to hear no more she hurried up the stairs, and reached the little chamber once their own, without encountering any one. Here, much to her surprise, she found her trunks nicely packed, and the keys in their secret hiding-place. None but Lura could have done this; and seating herself by the window, she gave herself up to the grief which she could no longer suppress. Tears fell fast, as she thought of the many happy

hours they had spent together in that room. Now an unknown future was before them. Yet one ray lighted up the darkness: Lura had promised that they should meet. Oh, when would it be? Where had she gone? It was cruel in her not to reveal her present retreat. Had she done so, how quickly she would have flown to her!

Her reveries were interrupted by the opening of the door, and she beheld the tall, straight figure of Mrs. Edwards entering. There was a subdued expression upon those thin features, and a sorrowful look in those cold gray eyes, which awoke a feeling of sympathy; and although her first inclination had been to flee from the room, she held out her hand to the grief-stricken mother, with a feeling akin to affection springing up in her heart.

"Oh, Flora, tell me where my child is," she exclaimed, as tears gathered in her eyes; "tell me where she has gone!"

"It would give me more pleasure than you can imagine if I were able to do so; but unfortunately, I am as ignorant as yourself in regard to her movements."

"Did you not know that she was going to leave her home?"

"I knew nothing of it until I entered this house a few moments ago; and I was very much grieved that she had done so."

The mother sank upon the floor in utter dejection.

"Oh, my child, my child!" she moaned; "who could have thought it would ever come to this? What can she do, poor, ignorant, unsophisticated girl? Who will care for her or give her a home?"

"Perhaps you have not taken the trouble to inform yourself as to her acquirements," said Flora, with some indignation. "I do not deem her very ignorant. With her unusually keen perceptive powers and greedy love for books, I doubt much if she is entirely unfitted to stand forth alone,

if need be, among the more sophisticated ones to be found in the world whither she has gone. But you have my heartfelt sympathies," she added, softening, as she saw the big tears coursing down the mother's pale cheeks; "and if it were in my power, I would this day restore her to you."

"You will not leave us?" said Mrs. Edwards, as she saw Flora rising, as if to depart. "Oh, stay with us, and she will come back. See my gray hairs! They will soon be brought in sorrow to the grave if my child come not back to me."

Flora was deeply moved, and would have spoken consolation to the mother's heart, but what could she say after all that had passed?

"No," she answered, "I cannot stay here. The only means within my power of removing contamination from this house is to remove myself. My low parentage has been revealed to you through some medium of which I am ignorant. I scorn for myself to conceal it. It has been the subject of conversation outside of your family circle; and to wipe out the stain which my presence among you has been deemed to bring, I must seek another home where my companions will be less fastidious."

Mrs. Edwards looked up in surprise, but only to see the retreating figure of Flora glide through the door and vanish from sight.

Flora had drawn her veil closely over her face, and was hurrying rapidly down the stairway, dreading some new encounter, when she felt her hand tightly clasped, and Edgar Edwards, the son and brother, stepped before her.

"Oh, let me go," she pleaded; "I have stayed quite too long already."

"No, no; you shall not leave in such haste. I am commissioned with Lena's petition for pardon, and must beg you to accept it."

"Tell her from me that she receives full absolution at my hands," she said, attempting to pass.

"Then you will come back to us, and bring peace once more to our circle?" he said, with a pleasant smile.

"No, that was more than was comprised in the absolution. There are circumstances which will ever prevent my taking up my abode again under this roof."

"But, Miss Flora, if I choose to remove those circumstances? You will then think differently?"

"It will require a power, sir, which you do not possess," said Flora, again endeavoring to go.

"Nay, do not attempt to pass me. I feel that you are in trouble, and that it is my duty to try to relieve you. I understand, as well as any one, the great distance which lies between our relative positions in the eyes of the world, but I love you, Flora; and if you will take my hand, I will lift you up to stand beside me. Then, as my wife, your birth and lineage will be forgotten." Here his petted chin received its wonted fond caress, and his long taper fingers sought his abundant hair.

Flora had forgotten her perplexities during this brief speech, and while laughter sparkled in her eyes, and played with mischievous delight all over her beautiful face—

"Oh, I beg of you not to sacrifice so much nobility for my especial benefit," she said, with mock gravity. "However much I may feel honored by your condescension, I can never consent to so unequal a union. Permit me, sir, to remain in the obscurity in which nature has been pleased to place me, and in which alone I feel myself capable of walking."

This was more than the honored scion of an illustrious line had any reason to expect. He could not readily comprehend all that he had heard; and while he stood in blushing confusion, unable, in so short a time, to frame

another speech appropriate to the occasion, she had darted past him and was flying with rapid steps down the street.

Kitty met her in the hall; and after despatching Jim for her trunks, they hurried together up the stairs.

Flora looked into the sick-room for a moment, where Anna had been relieved by the chambermaid, a bright, rosy-cheeked girl of about her own age, and then passed on with Kitty to Mrs. Lane's boudoir, whither the latter had been commissioned to bring her.

"Ah, *ma belle!*" exclaimed that lady. "See, Kitty, what a lovely glow there is upon her cheek! But there is a brighter one in her eye. Tell me, *petite*, what has happened to you."

"My face, I must believe, indicates every current of feeling in my heart. Henceforth I am determined to veil it, if it does not cease being such a tell-tale."

"That I would," said Kitty, laughing, "for it not only exposes your own heart, but it goes round stealing everybody else's."

"True, true," said Mrs. Lane. "But pretty blossoms were not made to be covered—ah, no!—but rather to be admired and loved;" and she drew the face of her own beautiful child down upon her bosom, and kissed it with all a mother's devoted tenderness.

"Flora," she said, a moment after, "a lady friend called upon me this afternoon who said she would be glad to receive little Clara into her family, if she proves upon recovery to be a good child, as a playmate and companion for her little daughter. I thought it a fine opportunity to secure a home for her, and therefore told her, with your consent, I should consider her pledged to this particular act of kindness."

"I am very glad," said Flora, "if she will be gentle with the poor child, and I leave it all with you. A heart so good will not be led into error."

"Oh, you silly flatterer! Away with you, both of you," she said, pushing them from her. "See that you adorn yourselves with a becoming toilet before you come down to tea, for there will be a pair of brilliant eyes staring at you, I dare say."

"Pshaw, mamma! who cares for Mr. Fenn? He thinks more of his favorite authors, as he calls them, than of all the pretty faces in the world."

That evening, when Flora entered the tea-room, she was astonished to see the dark-eyed stranger—her "hero of ice," as she had often called him—standing by the table, waiting to receive the ladies. The whole of her amusing adventure came up before her in lively colors, as she caught a look of those deep, dark orbs, as they, for a moment, rested upon her, and her native mirthfulness came dancing back to her eyes and lips. Mrs. Lane whispered in her ear, confidentially, as they were retiring to the drawing-room after tea, "that smiles were particularly becoming to her charming face, and that she must try and never be sad."

"Does neither of the young ladies play?" asked Mr. Fenn, approaching the piano. "Mrs. Lane has been so exceedingly kind in gratifying my love for sweet sounds that I fear to trouble her further."

"Yes," said Kitty, "Flora is called the best performer in our class, and she sings enchantingly."

"Oh, Kitty!" exclaimed Flora, blushing deeply.

"It's true, Mr. Fenn. Do make her sing."

Flora looked pleadingly at the thoughtless girl, but Mrs. Lane whispered "that there was no one there who need intimidate her, and that afterward they would have a good excuse for insisting upon a display of Miss Kitty's musical abilities."

She hesitated but for a moment; and, when Mr. Fenn offered her his arm to assist her to the instrument, she arose at once, and complied. Her fingers ran at first care-

lessly over the keys, then settled down upon a soft, mild prelude of one of the airs then in particular favor. Before she had finished, Kitty exclaimed,

“Not that one; I didn’t want you to sing that. Sing my favorite—the one I like so much.”

Flora obeyed; and as her rich voice, with its clear, sweet intonations, filled the room with its melodious sounds, as she warbled one of her native songs with its simple accompaniments, her attentive listener stood entranced, filled with wonder and admiration. Then she arose, and the young man, standing beside her, mutely spake his thanks when their eyes met while walking back to the sofa upon which Mrs. Lane and Kitty were sitting.

“Sublime!” whispered Mrs. Lane, as Flora took her seat beside her. “You must grace some of my *soirées* next winter.”

Thus happily flew the weeks away. Clara Saunders had recovered and gone to her new home, where Flora had promised to call and see her often; and yet she lingered in the elegant home of Kitty Lane.

Oh, how anxiously she awaited some information concerning her dear friend Lura! Yet it came not. A faint hope had taken possession of her, and retarded her exertions to procure a home for herself, and that was that she might once more enjoy the society of one who had cheered her through so many lonely hours. This had, however, passed, and to-morrow she should begin her work; no longer would she remain a helpless dependant upon the kindness of friends. How little she understood the difficulties which would cluster about the task which she had imposed upon herself! Who would take into their house without any recommendation a beautiful girl, richly dressed, to perform menial labor with which she was almost entirely unacquainted? Yes, it was true. What did she know of the work which she would be expected to perform if she assumed a servant’s place? The thought overpowered

her; and sinking into a chair, she buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly.

“Yet it must be done. I will lay aside these costly fabrics, which are so illy fitted to my present need, and dress myself in apparel becoming my station. Too long have I remained here, a humble recipient of a bounty which I can never repay.”

Thus she said to herself, rising to her feet, and walking to the window, where she stood gazing upon the passing figures in the street below.

“There is one whose bounty I cannot shake off—at least, at present. If my talents do not deceive me, this shall be fully compensated. Yes, I vow it—it shall be paid to the uttermost farthing! This shall be my future ambition. Toil, toil, is before me; but an object to be attained shall ever cheer me on, and my spirits shall not droop.”

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

ACCORDING to her new resolve, Flora searched the daily papers the next morning to find some opening, if possible, where she could at once commence earning her own livelihood. From the long list of "Wants" she selected two which she thought most likely to meet her present wishes, and taking the direction down upon a slip of paper, carefully concealed it in her pocket.

"You seem remarkably devoted to the morning news," said Kitty, coming up behind her and peering over her shoulder. "Ah ha! Arrival of the 'Vanderbilt.' Perhaps you are expecting that nice young Englishman. If so, I must hurry Anna up with my new silk, for I assure you, if he appears here again, you don't carry him off without a struggle."

"You can let Anna toil leisurely on," said Flora, laughing, "for no English bone of contention is expected by me; that is certain."

"It is, is it? Well, then, Diogenes, just jump out of your tub, and let us practice that last waltz;" saying which, the merry girl caught Flora in her arms, and the two were soon whirling up and down the spacious apartment, laughing and singing by turns, their cheeks glowing with the active exercise, and their flowing curls mingling in sportive grace, as they threaded through the mazy dance, until, giddy and exhausted, they sank down upon the sofa to rest.

"There!" said Flora, gathering her rich, abundant curls

in her hands; "if I am to caper very often after this fashion, these suffocators will be twisted up this way;" and suiting the action to the word, she wound them tightly in a large coil behind her head.

Kitty clapped her hands, and laughed loudly:

"Upon my word, Flora, you look like my aunt Sue. I wish Mr. Fenn could see you now; he wouldn't have the audacity to tell me again that you are prettier than I."

Flora was enjoying the merriment of her friend exceedingly, and did not at first notice that she had suddenly become silent; but upon looking up, she saw Mr. Fenn standing in the door, his large, dark eyes filled with the contagious mirth he had encountered.

"Capital, capital!" exclaimed Kitty, clapping her hands, as she perceived that Flora's eyes had fallen upon the intruder, and that she was hastily undoing her hair. "He saw you. Now, tell me upon your honor," she said, approaching the spot where he stood, "is she prettier than I? I mean will she be when old age has pulled all her hair out?"

Flora was very much mortified, and would have hurried from the room, but Mr. Fenn was coming toward her with his hand extended and an apology upon his lips. She received them both with much embarrassment; and as he took a seat beside her, Kitty again exclaimed,

"Now that you have gone through these preliminaries, tell me quickly: is she more beautiful than I?"

"Who shall decide between the stately, blushing rose and the pretty, soul-cheering forget-me-not?" he said, quietly; "I cannot. The most I do know about them is that the world would be very imperfect without either."

"Oh, you perverse man! The rose is the prettiest, you know it is;" and she pouted her pretty lips. "The very next time you ask me how I like that dashing, conceited lady with whom I saw you walking one evening, I'll just whisper 'forget-me-not.' How will you like that?" she

asked, laughing, and turning away, took her seat at the piano and commenced playfully drumming some familiar airs.

It was his turn now to look confused; but taking a magazine from his pocket, he asked Flora carelessly if she had seen the last number of Harper. She had not; and he continued:

"It has a new contributor this month, and the editor comes out with a notice very unusual for his staid pen, and the article is certainly deserving of it. A perusal would compensate you for the trouble. Here it is," he said, suddenly pausing, as he turned over the leaves. "It is entitled 'Echoes of the Night, by a Listener,' and it has a depth of thought and a power of imagination that are seldom found in magazine articles in these days, proceeding from a truly poetic mind, full of the wildest imaginings, yet replete with good taste and abounding in marks of genius."

Flora had taken the book, and was busily engaged in the perusal of the page pointed out to her, and did not hear the remarks which were intended for her ear. There was something strikingly familiar in the first few sentences. Where had she heard them? Still she read on, until Kitty again approached them, declaring it was time that very minute that they were preparing for school.

"I beg your pardon," said Flora, closing the book and turning to the gentleman. "I did not intend to read it in your presence, but became suddenly interested and lost as I proceeded."

"Another favorite author, I suppose," said Kitty, with feigned pettishness. "How glad I am that I am not a bookworm! Flora, if you ever write for the public good, as these poor scribblers pretend they do, I will not love you."

"No danger," said Flora, laughing; "I shall be too busily engaged in teaching ideas how to shoot to play with the

fire of poesy or plod along the old beaten track of literature."

"Going to turn schoolmarm? Upon my word! we'll see about that. I'd like to know how long such a glorious ambition has had possession of your brain, to the entire exclusion of common sense. But come along, or I shall have another exclamation point added to my name which it will give me some trouble to remove."

Flora arose, and Mr. Fenn accompanied her to the door.

"Will you sing for me to-night?" he asked, as he took her hand at parting. His manner was so gentle and his words so full of brotherly tenderness that she involuntarily raised her eyes to his face, filled with answering interest.

"With pleasure," she answered, "if I return in time. I have a short walk to take after school, and may not get back until after tea."

"I will not come until that time;" and bowing his morning adieu, he left the house.

Flora's heart palpitated all day as she thought of the disagreeable task which awaited her. It is always sad to break up old associations and seek new ones; but when the present is unusually full of brightness, and we are well assured by the change we take a downward step in the scale of happiness, the prospect is rendered doubly unpleasant by the vivid contrast. She was very happy in the home in which she seemed so firmly rooted. Circumstances were continually environing her to increase her joys and render the sundering of such congenial bonds each day more painful. Mr. and Mrs. Lane were so very kind and solicitous for her happiness, and Kitty, she well knew, had already begun to think of her as a companion upon whom she could rely for future fellowship, little dreaming that her adopted sister, as she often called her, would soon voluntarily sever the tie that bound them. Poor Flora! Her heart almost faltered as she thought of

the opposition she would be sure to meet from this source. But no; it must not be. Firmly had she determined to break the fetters of dependence which she found were galling her young spirits with their heavy, depressing weight.

The school in which she had entered as pupil was just the one to aid her in her future plans. When the time arrived, she would enter the list of teachers, ready for any situation which might be procured; and among the many applications which Mrs. Willard was almost constantly receiving, she was confident there would be some chance for her, although she had not at first entered for that purpose, as the greater portion of the pupils before her had done. Should this part of her resolve be effected, of which she had not a shadow of doubt, the rest would be quite easy. Yes, she would again be free. Study and toil were before her, yet unflinchingly she gazed at them, and nerved herself for the contest.

It was late that evening when she walked with slow but firm step along one of the pleasantly shaded streets in the upper portion of the city. The sun had long since disappeared behind a thick, dark cloud which came rolling up from the far west, emitting ever and anon its low, dismal threatenings, while the vivid lightnings sent their wild flashes in quick succession across the broad, black curtain that hung in terrific grandeur along the western sky. There was a look of deep dejection on the face of Flora as she hurried on, regardless of the gathering storm. Soon she stopped, looked at a slip of paper which she held in her hand, then at the door of a large brick building before which she was standing. For an instant a slight pallor stole over her features, then, with a firm resolve, she ascended the steps and rang the bell. A servant appeared, of whom she inquired for Mrs. Goodale. With much civility she was shown into the richly-furnished drawing-room where several ladies and gentlemen were engaged in animated conversation. All were suddenly silent, however,

as the servant announced the visitor. A matronly, middle-aged woman, showily attired, motioned her to approach; and trembling in every limb, Flora complied.

"I saw an advertisement in the morning papers," she said, "and in accordance with its directions have called."

A very audible titter came from the sofa near, but she did not turn her eyes in that direction, as she continued, her voice betraying her emotion,

"I thought perhaps I could fill the position to your satisfaction and my own."

"You must have been dull in understanding my wishes," replied the lady, blandly, "for I believe the advertisement particularly stated that I wanted a half-grown girl to perform very slight labor, while you are as tall as our young ladies, and look as if you might perform good service."

"Oh, do take her, mamma," simpered a voice from the sofa. "It would be so grand to have a quadroon waiting-maid, and she would make a capital one, and we could call her Olio, or some other fancy name. It would be so grand. Do take her, mamma."

These words, and the low, derisive laugh which accompanied them, fell with crushing weight upon the shrinking, sensitive heart of the beautiful girl; and raising her eyes beseechingly toward the speaker, she beheld, to her utter amazement, Mr. Fenn, with his gaze fixed wonderingly upon her. Her assumed calmness gave way beneath his glance; clasping her delicate hands together, she staggered back, and would have fallen to the floor, had not a manly arm been suddenly placed around her.

"Flora," he said, calmly, "what means this? A strange infatuation must have taken possession of you. Come, you are ill. I will support you, and accompany you safely to Mrs. Lane, in whose presence you will ever be saved from insult."

"No, no! I beg you will not trouble yourself; yet I thank you."

The last acknowledgment was quite unnecessary, since her tearful eyes had spoken it before her lips could shape the words.

He led her to the door without a word, when she turned her face pleadingly to his and begged he would allow her to go alone.

"How can I? You are still very pale and are trembling violently. Let me call a carriage; you are not able to take so long a walk."

But she reassured him, and bounded lightly down the steps.

Mr. Fenn had no desire to return to the room which he had left, and taking his hat, walked leisurely down the street. Here and there a lamp threw out its feeble rays upon the darkness, and the thunder's low peals came nearer, while the passers-by greeted each familiar face with a hurried word and the astounding news that a heavy shower was coming.

Flora had reached the first corner, and was hurriedly turning down the street, when she beheld a closely veiled figure approaching her. She slackened her pace involuntarily, and walked leisurely toward it. There was something familiar in the shadowy outline of the form; and while she was endeavoring to collect her scattered thoughts, a hand clasped her own, and Lura stood before her. Flora grasped her hand tightly in both of her own, while a slight scream broke from her lips.

"I have been watching for you," said Lura, in a low voice. "I saw you go into Mrs. Goodale's, yonder, and determined to meet you when you came out."

"Oh, where do you live? and what are you doing? Can I find you?" asked Flora, in a breath. "I have pined for you. It was cruel to keep me in ignorance so long. Tell me all."

"I can't now. See, it is already beginning to rain. Do you see that little cot, just down the street, yonder?"

There is my home. Come to me as soon as possible, for I have much to tell you. I am not unhappy, dear Flora—quite the reverse. Will you come?”

“To-morrow.”

“But it rains. Go with me now.”

“No, I must hurry; kind friends will be anxious about me.”

Flora drew her shawl more tightly about her, and was on the point of hastening away, when a carriage that had been rattling rapidly down the street stopped directly before her, and she heard her name spoken by some one, stepping from the door.

“Hasten, Flora,” said Mr. Fenn, taking her hand to assist her in, “or you will get very wet.”

She obeyed, and soon found herself closely sheltered, while the big rain-drops beat heavily upon all sides of the carriage, as it whirled along with rapid speed. Mr. Fenn was beside her :

“Flora, I beg that you will not consider me an intruder if I take the liberty of a friend, and ask you to give up the plan, whatever it may be, the attempted performance of which has given you so much pain this evening. You do not know so much of the world as I do, gentle girl. You have friends; cling closely to them, for they are more precious than rubies, and should not, from any slight cause, real or imaginary, be thrown away. Discarded kindness wounds the donor more than a score of thrusts from the keen point of sarcasm and contempt.”

Flora felt the power of these words, breathed so gently into her ear; but before she had time to reply, if, indeed, she could have summoned words to her aid, the carriage stopped, and Mr. Fenn placed her safely under the shelter of her present home, and then, re-entering the carriage, was driven rapidly away.

Kitty rushed to meet her, exclaiming,

“Well, this is as it should be. If I hadn't seen the car-

riage with my own eyes, my midnight dreams would have been haunted with the sight of witches sailing through the air on broomsticks, or riding one of those swift spirited pantomimes that Ben Franklin tried to catch and tame according to his fashion. Ha, ha, ha! But tell me, Flora, where under the sun have you been? and what made you stay so late? My pretty mamma is almost crazy about you—at least, I saw a big tear swimming around in her blue eye, as she left the room, after standing for half an hour at the window, looking out into the storm for you.”

Flora had thrown her arms affectionately around the chattering girl and kissed the sweet young face, so full of innocent hilarity, and they were now rapidly ascending the winding stairway to Mrs. Lane’s private dressing-room.

“I have been taking a long walk,” answered Flora, evasively; “and just as the storm reached me, Mr. Fenn came along with a carriage, and kindly brought me home.”

“Ah, yes! very kindly. No doubt he would say that you very kindly honored him with your company. A very curious thing this ‘kindness’ is. Like the school-master’s rule, it works both ways sometimes;” and her clear and silvery laugh rang through the extensive hall.

“Flora!” exclaimed Mrs. Lane, as the two girls entered with arms encircling each other’s waists; “I am so glad you have come. I have been worrying about you, child, and cannot consent to any more such long walks alone.”

There was a motherly tenderness in the tones of her voice, and affection beamed from her large eyes, as she returned the fond embrace bestowed upon her by the agitated Flora. Never before had love appeared so precious to her as now. Her sensitive soul was still writhing, pierced through and through by the keenly lacerating darts thrown from a cold, selfish nature, more degrading to the female

character in the eyes of civilization and Christianity than the tattered garments of poverty or the dark stain falsely and unjustly set by the law upon an ancestral ignominy; and more refreshing than the honeyed dew-drop to the withered flower were the words of kindness and love to the drooping spirits of the tempest-tossed orphan. Sad, sad heart! Ah! more closely must thou fold the wings of thy angelic faith over those weary throbbings, or thou wilt faint and grow despondent ere thy Father's voice shall reach thee, over the troubled waters, with its inspiring "Peace, be still!"

It was midnight, and Flora had risen from the bed to which refreshing slumber refused to come, and seating herself by the open window, was gazing out upon the clouded sky. The storm was past, and here and there a tiny star peeped through the darkness and looked tenderly down upon her. Ah! those silent friends! how she loved them! Consolation and peace always came to her upon their pure, silvery beams, even in the darkest hour, and distrust fled like a guilty coward before their cheering light.

Flora sat and gazed thoughtfully upward. The clouds were flying as a retreating army before the breeze; and as she mused, the full round moon slowly ascended from behind the eastern hills and bathed the slumbering city in a halo of heavenly peace.

"Shall the storms of my life ever thus beautifully pass away, and the hovering clouds ever vanish, and my path be gilded with the glorious light which comes up from the future?"

Mrs. Goodale and her two daughters were left by Mr. Fenn in a state of speechless amazement. They looked at each other through the gathering darkness in mute surprise. Mattie, the youngest, was the first to recover.

"Well, Kate," she exclaimed, "you have closed this interesting scene with a most exciting finale, I can assure you. We might as well ground arms now, as our captain-uncle

would say, and give up the contest; for as sure as you are alive, which might, I own, be open to doubt, Mr. Fenn, the rich bachelor, is, according to Tom's parlance, a 'goner' sure, and neither of us will have any more occasion to languish beneath his fascinating smile. Heigho! wonder if it wouldn't be very becoming in me to do some heroic deed—go and hang myself, for instance, and bring him back, a trembling penitent, at your feet?"

"Hush, Matt! Your levity is too provoking."

"Too provoking, is it? Well, then, I'll live to comfort you a while longer. Perhaps you don't know that he said all sorts of pretty things to me while you were torturing excruciating agony out of that old dilapidated piano. Besides, while you had that poor girl on the rack, my surprised look was full of sympathy, which, of course, he didn't fail to notice. Ha, ha, sister Kate! the farce was well played, and has an end worthy of its beginning;" and rising from her seat, she commenced chanting with a most ludicrous *sang-froid*:

"If I had a heart worth giving,
I'd search for some bold one to take it;
If life were a farce worth living,
I'd not on the love of one stake it;"

and with an assumed laugh, she glided from the room.

"He spoke of Mrs. Lane," said the mother. "I wonder what she has to do with one who is obliged to go around answering advertisements for a servant's place?"

"I don't know anything about it," replied the other, pettishly. "I only know that I have committed an error which I would give worlds to recall, were it in my power. Lewis Fenn is the only person I ever knew whom I could love—yes, more, I could adore him;" and the unhappy girl burst into tears.

A servant entered, bringing lights, and Mrs. Goodale,

anxious to alleviate her daughter's sufferings by inculcating another, said,

"Tom, why did you show that girl into the drawing-room when company was present? It really seems to me you never will learn to perform your duties as you should."

"Why, ma'am," said the servant, with a perplexed air, "I can't see no difference. She looked a lady, spoke like a lady, and her dress—sure, that looked like a lady's. How was I to know, sure, that she was no lady at all?"

"If you had any discernment, you might know by the manner, the way they move," said the lady, with great hesitation.

"Faith, and if that was all, the howly Virgin herself couldn't have moved more like a spirit or looked more sweet, sure."

An impatient gesture dismissed the luckless Tom from the room, and the mother and daughter brooded over the downfall of their ambitious castles.

Little did the object of all these hopes perceive the skillfully constructed net which cunning tact had been ingeniously weaving about him. Truly noble in himself, and an ardent admirer of woman as represented in her true character of gentle loveliness, he sought to place himself often beneath those permeating influences that were so well calculated to soothe and soften his sterner nature, and to bring forth those hidden beauties which would adorn his towering manhood, as the fair hand of creation throws over the rugged escarpments her rarest and sweetest flowers. But if, at any time, his penetrating glance detected beneath a captivating exterior the canker-worm of selfishness lying coiled and devouring what else would have been captivating sweets, he hurried away from the repulsive spectacle with loathing and disgust. For this reason did he abruptly leave the house where he had spent so many pleasant

hours, and turn with renewed admiration to the truthful and gentle Flora.

"Yet, after all," he soliloquized, upon returning to the carriage, "I may be whirling through a masquerade, and this apparently artless girl may be hooded and cloaked for the occasion. Yet I do not believe it. It is a morbid heart that feeds upon distrust."

Flora did not waver in her resolution. Amid the throng of trials which daily seemed to be so closely hemming her in, the greatest of all was the sacrifice of that love which had been so precious to her. Mrs. Lane and Kitty would never consent to her plans, and how could she be happy without their love? Then came the words, whispered so kindly in her ear, "More precious than rubies is the affection of true friends. Throw it not hastily away."

CHAPTER XXIII.

LURA'S NEW HOME.

THE pale moon had not yet finished her quiet march over the broad azure vault when the day-king arose majestically from his Orient bed, and with his dazzling brilliance extinguished her gentle light, awakening silent sleepers with his scintillating beams, and throwing over a reanimated world a flood of golden light.

Yet Flora slumbered on, weary and exhausted by the events of the preceding evening; it was not until a late hour that tired Nature's sweet restorer had come to soothe her agitation and lull her to rest. A loving kiss upon her lips, accompanied by a gushing laugh, awoke her, and Kitty Lane stood over her, her eyes sparkling with animation and her whole face beaming with suppressed mirth.

"Tell me what you were dreaming about," she exclaimed, as Flora opened her eyes. "You don't know how queerly you acted. One moment your cheeks would glow with excitement and your lips move as if about to speak, then the deep blush would roll away and paleness come over your face. What was it, Flora? Oh, I want to hear so much, for I watched you with more interest than I ever experienced in reading a novel."

Flora had remained silent, endeavoring to recall her receding thoughts, that had so suddenly been put to flight by Kitty's morning kiss.

"I really would be happy to gratify you," she said, at length, "but you have frightened away my pleasant visitors from dreamland, as you would scatter a flock of singing birds."

"Ah! you needn't tell me that;" and she snatched the slipper which Flora was about placing upon her foot. "You sha'n't have this or anything else until you tell me. Do you think I wish all my lessons spoiled to-day by such a disappointment? No, no, Miss Dignity! Besides, if you do not tell me, and Professor de Fontafoe scolds me about that provoking French, I'll tell him I forgot it because you would not satisfy me concerning an avowal you had in your dreams."

"Why, Kitty!"

"I will, positively. Then won't his black eyes twinkle at you?"

Flora joined in the laugh, as she said,

"I am quite safe, Miss Kitty, for you would never dare attempt so much French in one speech, and you know English conversation is forbidden all the week."

"Provoking!" exclaimed Kitty, with pouting lips.

"I really pity you," said Flora, as she continued her toilet. "I wish I could remember the dream which has excited you so much; I would give you a perfect revise of it."

"There is that same blush again;" and she pointed her finger at her. "I shall just tell my pretty mamma;" and she skipped out of the room.

Yes, Flora had been dreaming; and when her lively friend left her, the smile passed from her lips, and a pensive shadow rested upon her face.

"Yes, I wish I could remember all, for my own sake; yet his face was there, and looked so troubled. Those calm, blue eyes, with their expressive look, and—and—yes, he spoke to me. Ah! I do remember he asked me for that precious keepsake he gave me at parting. Oh, he is cruel—cruel!" and the poor girl would have given away to her emotions had not Kitty at this moment re-entered with a joyous bound and a loud exclamation of pleasure and surprise.

"Oh, Flora," and she clapped her hands, "take off that Quaker wrapper and put on your pretty blue one, for Cousin Hal is down stairs, and I want you to look your loveliest. It is so provoking! He came up in the night-boat and stayed at the hotel until morning, and now I must run off to school and leave him. Come, hurry!" and she pulled Flora from her chair. "I wish you to do my bidding; you look so sweetly in that pretty blue chintz."

"You humming-bird! cease your buzzing one moment, and let me ask you, 'What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba?'"

"Come, there's the breakfast-bell; and if he don't like you, I'll never forgive you, so come!" and with many lively repartees, they descended to the breakfast-room.

Flora started as she heard her own name mentioned in connection with "Harry Walton, our nephew;" and looking up, she beheld a pair of dark, luminous eyes fixed with an inquiring look upon her.

"I think we have met before," he said, with the most musical, manly voice in the world, as she returned his courteous bow. "Yes, I am not mistaken: you must be that charming naiad of the woods I saw some months ago up by the Falls, and Orpheus himself could not have made sweeter music."

Flora blushed deeply at these abrupt compliments, and knew not what to say. Mrs. Lane, noticing her embarrassment, said, quickly,

"Ah! you have met Miss Hawes before? I was not aware—"

"Yes," interrupted the young man, "but there was a great gulf between us."

"Just as there always will be between you and every pretty lady," chimed in Kitty.

"Didn't you tell me this very morning that you loved

me better than anybody else, you insinuating girl?" inquired the young man playfully.

"I was always accused of having a strange fancy," retorted Kitty. "There is Jim, for instance, who is lean, lank and leathery, and don't know but one word perfectly; yet I have an astonishing amount of affection for the poor fellow."

They all joined in a merry laugh around the table, while Harry Walton declared "he would find a *fac-simile* of leathery Jim, and love her to distraction, just out of spite."

Kitty pouted, and Flora, happy in the merry sunshine which ever maketh glad the heart, finished her breakfast without speaking, and asking, with a blush, to be excused, left the room.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harry; "she's the most beautiful creature I ever beheld. Who is she? and from whence did she come?"

"A young lady who is attending Mrs. Willard's school," answered Mrs. Lane—"an orphan, I believe; and poor Kitty is in desperate love with her. I intend she shall stay with us, for we shall all be lonely without her."

"Oh yes," said Kitty; "I should die without her, she is so good, so gentle, so changeable, so—everything, fickle as an April day, yet always pleasing. The whole school loves her, yet it is amusing to see some of them curl their lips and whisper bitter words to each other about her, as she sails by in her dignity, declaring they wouldn't speak to or look at her, the proud plebeian; and when she condescends to give them a word, or to speak to or look at them, to see them anxious to wipe the dust from her shoes."

"Then she is proud, is she, Kitty?" asked the young man.

"She is a paradox," answered Mrs. Lane, "which at times I am puzzled to understand."

"It's well I'm going off again in the night-boat, or I fear I should be obliged to go back to New York heartless if not hatless."

It was Wednesday; and Kitty, after mature deliberation, came to the honest conclusion that it was without doubt her duty to spend the day with Cousin Hal, instead of going to school, as there was but one session, and Flora received a good-bye kiss, and walked away alone.

"Kitty, let me rob that dewdrop from your lip," said her cousin, as she returned to the parlor, looking grieved, and turned to the window. "Ah, my fair cousin! you are angry with my jesting," he said, approaching and placing his arm about her. "Forgive me, pretty cousin," he continued, stooping to kiss the sweet lips that pouted so bewitchingly, as she looked up into his fine face; "you know I never can love any one else half as well as I do you."

"Oh, Hal," she exclaimed, passionately, returning his caress, "you grow more and more splendid every day you live; but I don't—I know I don't. Mr. Fenn calls Flora the beautiful, stately rose, and poor me the pretty forget-me-not. I know what it means: the rose overshadows and completely hides the tiny flower."

"More precious to me, dear Kitty, is the little unpretending violet, that always looks up to me in loving confidence, than a dozen stately roses that are obliged to bend their heads to look down upon me. You are my precious violet, Kitty, and no statelier flower can ever hide you from my love."

Kitty looked very happy and satisfied, but blushed deeply, as Mrs. Lane's step was heard close beside them. She gave the young couple a reproachful look, as she said,

"Harry, did I not tell you—"

"Oh yes, my dear aunty," interrupted the young man; "you told me a great many things, and I am your most obedient servant, madam. I was just looking at Kitty to

see her pout because I thought Miss Flora more beautiful than herself, that's all." But the merry twinkle in his dark, flashing eyes disclosed all to the careful mother, and she secretly determined to leave them alone no more that day.

Harry Walton, as Kitty declared, was the most beautiful, the noblest and the best young man that ever lived; and those who best knew him never disputed the truth of the blushing girl's assertion. But there was one stain upon his fair escutcheon which could not easily be washed away: he was poor. Mr. Lane's sister, when dying, gave him her darling babe, which was so soon to become an orphan. The brother had most generously provided for and cherished his sister's parting gift, and the young man was now in a good situation as clerk in one of the extensive publishing houses to be found in the great city of New York. His uncle's agreement was therefore fulfilled, and now he himself must accomplish the rest—struggle upward, as his ancestors had done before him. He loved the beautiful Kitty, who had clung to him in her innocent childhood; and although he had often been warned of his folly, he had not yet, as we have seen, overcome his boyish passion and arrived at the estate of man's "common sense."

At school, Flora missed the cheerful smile and gleeful words of her companion, and often during the day, while intently engaged in her various duties, a dark, spectral thought would suddenly arise in her mind and send the blood rushing through her palpitating heart. That afternoon she was to enjoy a nice long talk with Lura; yet in spite of this pleasing prospect, a gloomy apprehension possessed her mind. She tripped lightly home from school, however, for the great joy that came bubbling up in her heart had chased away the sombre shadows, and she looked forward to her visit with Lura with unbounded delight. After a hasty dinner by herself, she arranged her toilet for her walk. She then descended to the drawing-

room, where she expected to find some of the family, but no one was there. Learning that they had all gone out in the carriage immediately after dinner, she left word with the rosy-cheeked chambermaid that she had gone out to visit a friend, and would not return before tea, and rapidly proceeded on her walk.

Pleasing expectancy lends swift wings, and in a short time she was knocking at the door of Lura's new home. It was indeed a humble cot in which she had taken refuge, but the words, "I am not unhappy—quite the reverse," seemed to be whispered to her again by the lilac bush beside her that struggled alone for life in the narrow spot, six feet square, of good rich earth. Flora had just time to perceive that the house was old and fast becoming dilapidated by Time's remorseless fingers, and that here and there a narrow strip of dingy white paint remained as a connecting link between its present decay and its former tidiness, when the door opened and an old lady, plainly dressed and stooping from the weight of many years, stood before her.

Her face was very thin and pale, and her brow deeply corrugated; but when Flora asked for her friend Lura, a pleasant smile illumined her aged face with a glow really pleasurable to look upon. At the same moment Lura sprang through a door on the left of the narrow entry, and the two girls were clasped in each other's arms.

"I came as soon as I heard your voice," said Lura, kissing her, "but I am rather particular who sees my ugly face just now."

"I think you have grown very pretty," said Flora, as they entered the little room from which Lura had just emerged. This was the parlor, or, as Mrs. Clark, its aged owner, termed it, the "keeping-room," which certainly seemed the more appropriate name. A plain rag carpet, remarkable only for its durability, covered the floor, six glossy wooden chairs stood there which had for many

years preserved a respectable, dignified silence in close proximity with each other and the wall, and a small, prudish table near by boastfully exposed its unspotted surface, presenting to view only the religious precepts of Baxter and the glowing beauties of Young's "Night Thoughts," mingling with the songs of Moore and the Scottish lays of Burns. In the centre of the room was a very demure-looking rocking-chair, to which Lura escorted her visitor. The blinds were thrown open, but the snow-white curtains, ironed to an oppressive smoothness, were allowed to hang down over the small narrow windows in the usual style, with the intent, as Lura asserted, of keeping out the gaze of the intruding sun.

"Is it possible," asked Flora, "that your friends have not yet discovered your retreat?"

"I reckon not; I doubt whether they would ever think of old Mrs. Clark, for it is many years since she worked for us, and after age and infirmity had enfeebled her all connection was broken off between her and our family, except with myself. I never forgot her kind, maternal words that used to sink so soothingly into my young heart, and I often came here unmolested, since none troubled themselves about my acts or associates after my labor was done. I believe I never troubled them with the name of my particular friend." The old bitterness arose for a moment to the speaker's face; but driving it away, she said, gayly, "Now, excuse me just a moment; I must get my work. No leisure moments for me now; I have become a model of a happy busy-bee;" and with a light step and a happy smile, she left the room.

"What are you doing?" asked Flora, as she returned with her hands full of white muslin.

"Making external coverings for internal sustenance," she replied, laughing. "You see," she continued, holding up for her visitor's inspection part of the work which she had brought with her, "there are a good many stitches in that

half of the shirt. I have to make two of them for my weekly allowance of bread and butter."

"It's too bad," said Flora, "and I eat the bread of idleness."

"There's nothing bad about this, and I rather enjoy it," said Lura, forcing a smile. "Perhaps you would like to hear my daily programme of exercises?"

"Oh yes; I want to hear everything about you."

"Well, then, I rise at five in the morning. See what the morning dew does to my roses;" and she laughed and placed her hands upon her cheeks.

"Or rather the gentle sunshine," interrupted Flora.

"Just as you like. But as I was saying, I rise at five, prepare our plain morning meal of coffee and hot rolls, fly over the house for half an hour with broom and brush, then rest myself by the little back window of my sleeping-room, and stitch, stitch, with an open book before me, into which my eyes often wander, taking into my mind a paragraph or sentence, then work on industriously while it is storing itself away in one of memory's secret cells until the brain is weary; then, as it is nearly noon, I come down to the kitchen, get everything ready for dinner, which good Mrs. Clark always finishes, then back to my needle and book. Dinner over, the succeeding hours are but a repetition of the morning's labors until tea-time. Then my work is laid aside, and after a hasty walk to make the few necessary purchases for the table, or to carry home my work, or to attend to any matter of business requiring it, I take my lamp and retire to my little room above for a feast of fat things."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Flora, in surprise.

"I mean that I go deliberately at work to manufacture all sorts of pleasant things, and that I feast upon them at my leisure."

Flora still looked puzzled.

"Or, in other words, I am a wild reveler in the fields of

imagination. Perhaps you have forgotten that I had an attendant Muse when we were all alone in the fair 'Utopia' of other days?"

"Oh no; I remember it perfectly well. Your poem, 'The Neglected Rose,' was so beautiful."

"I expect that will appear in the next issue of Harper," said Lura, with some slight hesitation.

A thought suddenly shot into Flora's mind:

"Were you the new contributor in last month's number? — 'Echoes of Night, by a Listener'?"

"Even so, dear Flora. But I heard no strange things, did I?"

"How stupid I was! I might have known it," said Flora, with much fervor. "It was very beautiful, and some parts seemed so familiar."

"Flora, you'll not betray me?" she asked. "I choose to peep at the world for a while through a keyhole; you understand?"

"Certainly; I will not."

She did not appear to notice Flora's reply, and continued:

"In less than two months I shall have a work ready for publication that will either raise or sink me, and I must patiently await the issue. My old friend, Mrs. Clark, has a brother who is often here, a fine, intellectual old gentleman, who has taken quite a practical interest in my ambition, and it is through him that I have been presented so soon to the world. He lives in New York, and comes up here with a sloop which he owns. He has encouraged me to think that I shall succeed."

"I am sure you will," said Flora, "and I shall feel very restless until it is decided."

"I am not so sanguine. The public mind nowadays seems to be satisfied with nothing but the most tragical scenes, unreal in themselves and unsatisfying in their tendencies, and my peculiar weakness is a love for the beauti-

ful, the great, the noble, as found by a little fanciful sifting in every-day life. This I expect will prove insipid to the highly-seasoned taste, and my poor 'Thorny Way' will be thrown aside with a 'Bah!' because there are not death and murders lurking all along the path."

Thus the two girls chatted on, happy in the present and in the fanciful future which imagination spread out before them, when, to Flora's great surprise, tea was announced by Mrs. Clark.

"I must go," she exclaimed, suddenly, rising; "I did not think it was so late!"

"Oh, I hurried up my biscuits," said the kind old lady, "so that you could have plenty of time to get back before dark. Come, the tea is getting cold;" and leading the way, Flora followed, though much against her will.

"They will expect me back, and I fear Mrs. Lane will not like it," she said, as she took a seat at the little round table, with its snowy white cloth and dark blue dishes.

"Oh, fie!" said Lura, laughing. "You are more mine than hers; and if need be, we will have a controversy in regard to it. Now, tell me truly, Flora, isn't there something more comfortable, more soul-satisfying, in these nicely-browned biscuits, that square piece of unstamped butter and that abundant supply of sweetmeats in a common china dish than you would find at Mrs. Lane's sumptuous board?"

Flora laughed, but without answering her question, remarked,

"You have slighted that tempting loaf of cake, which looks nice enough to grace any repast."

"Ah! that was because I made it. It isn't modest, you know, to praise one's own work."

"I didn't answer your question, and it seems quite unnecessary to do so, for I believe I am only an echo of your theories, Lura. But there is one thing about it: I enjoy this visit throughout heartily. I only wish it was to last."

"There, now! you have said it," cried Lura, clapping her hands and laughing immoderately. "I have been fishing for that little sentence all this afternoon."

"You astonish me, Lura."

"No, no. Haven't Mrs. Clark and myself been contriving all the morning how we could make you happy, and everything comfortable about you?—that is, if you would ask to come, which you seemed determined not to do."

Flora grew very sad.

"No," she said, "I must get some place where I too can earn my bread by the sweat of my brow. I cannot throw away the brilliant example of which I have been a witness this afternoon."

She spoke with assumed playfulness, but the spirit of gloom which lurked beneath the words did not escape the notice of her companion.

Lura looked at her aged friend for one moment, and then said, pleasantly,

"That's just what we wanted. You see, Flora, I am very busy just now, and cannot afford to spend so much time about the house. Now, if you would only come and relieve me of these duties, I could spread my wings and soar—yes, soar, my dear Flora. I seem in a cage without you. Will you come?"

Flora was silent for a moment, but the sadness passed from her countenance, and Lura knew that she had not played the part in vain.

"I'll see about it," she replied, at last. "I should enjoy it so much, but—"

"But what? I know very well what it implies. You think our little work will not yield sufficient pay? Is that it?"

"Perhaps so," answered Flora, smiling.

"Well, then, let me tell you there is as much to be done as you will find a disposition to do. Never fear. Your

delicate little fingers may find their way into the wash-tub Wednesday afternoons. What do you think of that?"

"I think it a very nice arrangement, and I will come."

Lura again clapped her hands triumphantly, while Mrs. Clark, a tear dimming her eyes, said,

"You make me think of other days, my children; but I am sure I shall enjoy it very much. Your merry voices and ringing laughter will make my old heart young again."

Flora clasped the wrinkled hand tenderly, and with reiterated promises of a speedy return and a hasty removal, she left the house and hurried back to the elegant home of her friend, Kitty Lane.

"Yet oh," she murmured to herself, "how very kind they are! God will bless them, for I never can repay them for one half the sympathy they have bestowed upon poor **unhappy me!**"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PURPOSE FULFILLED.

AS Flora entered, Kitty came to meet her, with many imprecations and threats of summary justice should she ever dare again to go away when they wanted her so much to accompany them in one of the loveliest rides out in the country.

“But you are sufficiently punished, Miss Truant; just come into the parlor and witness your reward;” and without waiting for a reply, the chatty girl seized her arm and drew her into the room.

It was a glowing picture which met Flora's gaze, as she entered—the rich velvet carpet, which yielded to her gentle tread, the luxurious sofas and divans, which offered repose, on every side, chairs that wooed to their soft embrace, while beauty and magnificence filled the entire apartment. All was in startling contrast with Mrs. Clark's quiet little parlor, and its six straight-backed wooden chairs, that offered neither comfort nor repose, and for a moment Flora's future home rose up before her with anything but an inviting aspect. It was but for a moment, however, for by the marble centre-table whither Kitty was leading her she perceived Mr. Fenn, standing with extended hand to greet her. On the opposite side, Mr. and Mrs. Lane reclined upon a sofa, listening with evident interest to the clear, manly voice of Harry Walton, who was undoubtedly making a very fine speech, if the marked attention of his auditors was any criterion by which to judge, while his own manner expressed the

utmost indifference, his feet being elevated upon the window-sill and his head resting calmly upon the back of his chair.

"I have been waiting for you," said Mr. Fenn, as Flora took his proffered hand. "But you are looking very weary. Let me conduct you to a seat."

"No, you don't," said Kitty, laughing, and at the same time holding up before her companion's bewildered gaze a beautiful bouquet of the choicest and rarest flowers. "Now, look; feast your greedy eyes on unapproachable sweets. Isn't it superb? Can any royal queen boast of richer gems?"

Flora had grasped the fragrant flowers in her hand; and yielding to the sudden impulse of her heart, she pressed them fervently to her lips, murmuring, in an almost inaudible voice,

"God's precious gifts! How very, very kind He is, to bestow upon us such evident tokens of His fatherly love!"

"See, see!" shouted Kitty, clapping her hands, as she turned to the group by the window; "Flora is enchanted over my flowers, and I fear purposes eating them."

"No, no, fair cousin," said the young man, suddenly, lowering his feet and elevating his head at the same time; "don't permit it. Remember that I paid nearly all of my spending-money for those fading beauties, and received a scolding as recompense for my great sacrifice."

Flora smiled and handed the flowery treasure to its rightful owner, at the same time assuring the giver that there was not enough of the cannibal in her nature or inclination to induce her to sacrifice such rare gifts to a vulgar appetite.

"Cannibal? You don't really believe that they possess human properties?"

"Very nearly, if not quite," she replied, with downcast eyes; for she became strangely conscious that Mr. Fenn

was looking fixedly at her. "Yet they always seem to me like angel visitors, whispering sweet tidings of that purer land where their bloom is fadeless," she said, in a low voice.

Harry Walton offered no further remarks upon the subject, but reseating himself, was soon engaged in a sprightly conversation with his companions. Kitty soon joined them, and Flora was about to leave the room, for the purpose of removing her walking-dress, when Mr. Fenn, taking her hand, led her to a sofa near, saying carelessly, as he did so,

"You can lay off your bonnet and shawl here, for I wish to be entertained a short time. I am lonely, and came here to have you cheer me. Will you, Flora?"

"It will give me great pleasure to do so, if I can. Shall I play for you?" she asked, removing her hand.

"No; please to talk with me. I had much rather hear your voice in conversation to-night."

"I am a very poor conversationalist," said Flora, taking the proffered seat beside him.

"And the reason is because you are too dreamy," said Mr. Fenn, "too ideal, for practical talk;" and a shadow passed over his fine face. "This 'purer land' of which you have just spoken—those angel spirits that look at you from the lily's cup, or peep through the expanding leaves of every opening flower—what is it all but the wild gibbering of fancy? There is nothing real in it, and such thoughts will poison your young brain, Flora. Do you not know it?"

"Are you jesting with me, Mr. Fenn?" she asked, looking at him with unfeigned surprise. "I cannot believe that you express your real sentiments in the words you have just uttered. I will not deny that fancy adds to these golden truths many winning charms; but would you not believe, if you should receive from your distant home some brilliant token of fond remembrance and affection, that it

whispered to you of love, bringing up many pleasing thoughts from the past, and filling the future with blessed anticipations? Such are flowers to me—blissful tokens of a Father's love."

The face of the speaker glowed with interest, as she dwelt upon the favorite theme which her young heart had cherished for years, and in whose dreamy depths she had often found comfort and pleasure.

"In your future life you will find the gilding of your pet theory wholly worn off," said Mr. Fenn, musingly, "and that all these things are accomplished by the most practical laws of nature—nothing more."

"Yes, but who was the creator of Nature? Who endowed her with powers adequate to bring about such pleasing results?"

"Let me, according to reputed 'Yankee practice,' ask you a question before answering: Who created your God? and whence came His power?"

Flora was shocked, yet she answered, calmly, "No human intellect can appreciate or understand this idea, 'without beginning or end.'"

"Very true; there is mystery everywhere which the mind cannot fathom. But do you really believe that a Being possessing such powerful attributes as Maker of heaven and earth could stoop to such trifling sport as decking His stupendous work with simple perishing flowers?"

"Most certainly I do; and it is so sweet to know it, for it is not merely a simple act of faith, but a cheering certainty."

"Flora, you are an enthusiast," he said, warmly.

"I hope," she replied, meekly, "that I am a child of God, and that I have faith in His reiterated assurance that 'not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice.'"

"Flora," he said, after a pause, "I fear that you will think worse of me from this conversation than I deserve. I am not an infidel; the name of God is sacred to me, as is

also His character. I am only what the world calls 'practical,' seeing nothing beyond the scope of my natural vision, yet fully appreciating everything noble and beautiful that comes within its range. However, I did not come here to trouble you with my dull theory," he continued, with an evident desire to change the subject, "but to have a pleasant little chat, and I have learned, through its medium, that you have thrice falsely represented to me your conversational powers."

"You touched the silver chord in my heart which always vibrates noisily, in spite of myself."

A short silence followed, broken by Mr. Fenn's carelessly remarking,

"I called at your former home to-day."

Flora started, she knew not why; but commanding herself, she asked,

"Did you find them all well?"

"All well, but unhappy."

"Why so?"

"Did you not know that Lura had left home and gone no one knows whither?"

"I knew she had gone."

"Very strange conduct in a child, truly, and something, too, which neither the family nor any one else can understand."

Flora did not speak, and he continued:

"Her sister seemed very much distressed, and it was my sympathy for her, it may be, which made me feel sad to-night. Can you give me any information concerning the wayward child and sister with which I can comfort the sorrowing ones?"

Without appearing to notice the inquiry, Flora rejoined by asking:

"Is this the first time you have heard of the 'wickedness' of this poor deluded girl?"

"The first time, for I supposed it had just happened."

"Oh no; I knew of it two months ago."

"You surprise me," ejaculated Mr. Fenn, while a shade of thoughtfulness gathered upon his brow. "But you have given me no information concerning her present abode."

"I have no information to give," she replied, with embarrassment. "What I may chance to know can do her family no good, unless it be that I am very sure she is quite well and happy."

The approach of Kitty interrupted the conversation at this point.

"You both look as though you were being tortured before a confessional or suffering with the nightmare, and no doubt will thank any one for interrupting you. Will you not, Flora? But," exclaimed Kitty, "I forgot to tell you that poor Anna's mother is very sick. She was here this morning, and tears came into her eyes as she was telling us about her. Shall we not go and see her in the morning?"

"By all means. Poor girl! she seems so sad."

"Isn't it too bad? Cousin Hal is going, and will not be up again for three months. It's decidedly too bad."

"Ah! but you have a keepsake—something to think of every day during that time," said the young man, coming up.

"No I haven't. The flowers will be faded long before that time."

"Yes, the fairest flowers will fade, I have often heard; but the keepsake, Kitty," he said, bending over her, "is our morning quarrel. Will you cherish it?"

After a few hasty adieus and one or two sage admonitions from Mrs. Lane on needless expenditures, the two visitors left the house, Harry Walton to proceed to the boat which was to take him down the river, and Mr. Fenn to his room at the hotel to brood over his thoughts at leisure.

Lena Edwards was certainly not beautiful, but there was a womanly grace and meekness about her that had charmed him; and often, as he sat beside her, listening to the modu-

lated tones of her voice, so full of sympathy and love, he felt constrained to believe her the very embodiment of all goodness and womanly gentleness. Occasionally, however, doubts would flit before him, when her name was mentioned by others, and twice he had beheld the shadow upon one beautiful face which had been thrown there by her. Ah! why was this? Thus he mused, as his head sank upon his pillow that night; and when he dreamed, thoughts of other days brooded over him.

Early the next morning, according to previous arrangement, the two girls started to visit the sick mother of the poor seamstress. Flora carried a small basket filled with delicacies, which Mrs. Lane had kindly provided for the invalid, and hurriedly but pensively they proceeded on their way. Kitty's buoyant spirits were unusually clouded, and her vivacity was entirely gone. Flora also was exceedingly sorrowful; for as she lay restlessly upon her pillow the previous night, she had determined this day should not pass without a communication of her resolve and the project of her removal to her new home to her dearest friends, Mrs. Lane and Kitty. But oh, how hard the struggle seemed, now that it was so near! They had been so kind, so very solicitous for her happiness; how could she grieve them? Even Mr. Lane, who never spoke unless the words were pressed out of him by compelling circumstances, had always looked so pleasantly upon her, and his morning and evening salutations had a paternal tenderness in them. They could not be at all suspicious of her intentions, she thought; for when the holiday visit to New York was discussed, her name was included in the list. How much she would enjoy such a recreation! Her duties and perplexities weighed heavily upon her. Could she but throw them all aside for a week only, how much lighter the burden would seem when resumed! But no; why should her body be nourished by the hand of dependence? Other hands have toiled, other hearts been wearied by deepening cares; why

should she seek exception, and clog the wheels of her future happiness by the unliquidated debt of past obligations? No, no; she was strong and reputed to possess talent; why should she not use it, especially when by so doing her own happiness would be increased?

Kitty first broke the silence:

"Flora, I had such a strange dream last night. It makes me sad, for I cannot rid myself of the conviction that it will prove true."

Flora was on the point of indulging in raillery at her dreaming tendencies, but she saw that her face was ashy pale, and that her lips quivered with emotion.

"Why, dear Kitty, how is this? I am astonished that you should be thus affected by an idle, wandering dream. Tell me what it was. You know I am skilled in the art of interpreting the meaning of these midnight marauders. Tell me all, dear Kitty; I am sure you have no reason for being thus disturbed."

"I suppose that I must have been sad when I retired, for I do love Harry dearly. Oh, Flora, did you ever love?"

Flora blushed deeply, but answered, calmly:

"Oh yes; I have loved many, and you among the number, dear girl."

Kitty did not notice the answer, but continued:

"You heard him speak at parting of our morning quarrel. Well, I pouted because he said that if he remained here you would steal his heart. Then he came to me, with his beautiful face looking so sorrowful, and said he never could love any one else half so well as he loved me, called me his pet flower, his poesy of love, and kissed me so tenderly. Oh, Flora, I do love him so dearly! Beautiful, noble Harry!"

"But the dream?" suggested Flora, anxious to dispel the gloom which was weighing her down.

"Oh yes; I will tell you. I dreamed that I was dead—"

yes, Flora, dead. I beheld myself cold, pale and motionless; and although seemingly away from the inanimate body, yet I possessed the power of feeling. Harry came, and bending over me, bathed my marble face with tears; and although I felt them burning as they fell, I had no power to return his caresses, and then, oh, then, I saw him open his heart—yes, his heart, dear Flora—and take from its secret chamber, which he whispered was the one kept sacred for my love, the most beautiful flowers that I ever beheld, and strew them over me. Flora, was it not strange—very strange? Still he continued to deck my lifeless form until it was hidden from sight, and a pyramid of rarest exotics lay heaped up before him. Flora, I shall die, and Harry will embalm my memory with the richest treasures of his manly heart. I know it—yes, I know it; I cannot disbelieve it if I would, and your art of seeking out hidden mysteries will avail me nothing.”

Flora was silent; this was indeed beyond her boasted skill. They had slackened their pace while Kitty was speaking, but already the humble house that stood a little way up the side of Mount Ida was in sight, and in a few moments more they would have reached it. Flora, endeavoring to assume a tranquil demeanor, which she was very far from feeling, at last spoke:

“Kitty, there were many things that would naturally have influenced your dreams. The avowal of his love, the beautiful flowers he gave you, then his departure, your sadness,—all these came back and formed themselves into the strange scenes you witnessed in your sleep. There is, there can be, nothing more to it, and I beg you will not make yourself unhappy and distress your darling mother by such unfounded fears. Do not, dear Kitty; happiness is too rich and rare a boon to be sacrificed to idle dreams.”

They had reached the cottage, and a gentle tap at the door brought the pale young seamstress to them. She started back when she beheld the visitors, and a rose-tinted

blush spread over her neck and face. A smile of pleasure quickly succeeded it, as she invited them to enter. On the opposite side of the room, close by an open window, where some luxuriant geraniums shut out the morning sun, sat an aged woman in an easy arm-chair, fanned by the fragrant breezes that came down the hillside and played with the odorous blossoms standing near her.

"Mother is better," said Anna, in response to their inquiry, as they advanced toward the invalid, who was extending a trembling hand to welcome them.

"Yes," she answered, with a feeble smile; "God is very good to me, and has taken away all my pain. I am very easy and very happy this morning."

Flora pressed the soft, wrinkled hand very tenderly in her own, as she said,

"But you are still very weak."

"Yes," she answered, and a smile of ineffable sweetness stole over her wan features—"yes, I am very weak; but God is my strength; with Him I shall soon be at rest."

Anna placed her hand lovingly upon her mother's brow and smoothed back the silvery locks, while a tear fell upon her cheek, and she turned hastily aside to hide it.

"This visit must be a very short one," said Flora, handing the little basket to Anna, "as we have been loitering by the way, and must hasten to school."

"Oh, mother," said Anna, cheerfully, as she was emptying the basket, "here is a bottle of wine. Just what you wished for this morning. Mrs. Lane was very thoughtful to send it."

"Oh yes, she was very kind," replied the feeble voice. "Carry to her my thanks, and may God reward her."

"May I not come often?" asked Flora, as she took the invalid's hand at parting.

"As often as you wish, both of you," she said, extending her other hand to Kitty; "we shall always be happy to see you."

"Thank you," said Kitty, and Flora raised the emaciated hand to her lips, and they departed.

All the morning Kitty remained silent and dejected. But the sparkling effervescence of her young and joyous nature could not remain long compressed; and when she returned home at night, she was the same happy Kitty, with the exception of a shade of thoughtfulness that still lingered upon her face, which would occasionally, when left to repose, deepen into an expression of seriousness.

When Mrs. Lane had retired to her private dressing-room, as was her usual custom before attiring herself for the evening, Flora stole noiselessly in, and coming up behind the chair in which she was sitting, stooped and kissed her smooth white forehead.

"Ah, *ma belle!*" she exclaimed, without raising her eyes from the piece of embroidery she held in her hand; "I was thinking of you—both of you, my children—and have concluded that you must be dressed alike at the quarterly hop which comes off four weeks from to-day."

Flora did not speak. Her heart was too full, and she felt the hot tears swelling up from its overflowing depths.

"You are both to be in the 'garland dance,' aren't you?" and she raised her eyes for the first time.

"Kitty is not here," said Flora, her voice betraying her agitation, "for I chose to come alone to talk with you. Oh, my dear friend," she continued, weeping, "you will think me heartless and unappreciative, but it is not so. I am very thankful for all the kindness you have shown me, and prize your love more than my poor tongue can tell."

"What do you mean?" interrupted Mrs. Lane, while an angry shadow clouded her face—"what do you mean, girl? Speak! You do not surely propose to put your silly resolve into execution which you mentioned to me many weeks ago?"

"Yes," answered Flora, firmly, driving back her tears;

"I must leave this pleasant home you have so kindly proffered me, and upon which I have trespassed too long already, throw off the indolence which so illy becomes one in my position, and do as my better judgment impels me to do—earn my own bread."

"Is this your unalterable determination?" asked the lady, sternly.

"Yes, it is. Long have I struggled with inclination and duty, but the conflict is over, and my purpose fixed as the law of the Medes and Persians."

"Then go, heartless girl! I have cherished you with fond maternal love; but if you can so unrelentingly tear yourself from my affections, I cast you from me as an unworthy thing. Go!"

"Do not be angry with me," Flora pleaded, while the tears streamed down her burning cheeks. "I would do as you wish, if it were possible, but something compels me to go; I cannot stay."

"No one invites you stay. On the contrary, I bid you go;" and the angry woman arose and rang the bell. "Bid Kitty come to me," she said to a servant who appeared; and Flora, burying her face in her hands, hurried from the room.

"Oh, this is too bad, too bad!" she sobbed, throwing herself upon the bed in the room she had so long called her own; "I did not expect this. Oh, why is Fate so stern with me? Every pleasure turns to bitter ashes on my lips. O God! thou wilt never forsake me—no, never!" and the trembling hands were clasped and the streaming eyes turned supplicatingly upward. A full half-hour passed thus, when the door slowly opened, and Kitty stole softly up to her side.

"Flora, you are very cruel," she said, laying her hand coldly upon her shoulder. "My dear mamma is more disappointed than you can well imagine. It seems she had a pet plan which but now reached my ear, and as you may

suppose takes away the sting of our parting," she continued, with perceptible irony in her voice: "it was that you should enter our family fold as the wife of Harry Walton."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Flora, rising to her feet.

"No, not impossible, but altogether possible, as I have just received the astonishing disclosure from her own lips. On this account I came to ask you not to meet her again; she is very angry with you, and considers you very stubborn. But, Flora, we are not angry with each other, are we?" she asked, stepping forward and kissing the weeping girl. Flora caught her in her arms, and for a few moments the two girls wept, clasped in fond embrace.

"Now, good-bye, Kitty," said Flora, more cheerfully; "I must go."

"To-night?"

"Yes, now."

"Oh, how lonely I shall be!" sobbed Kitty; "but we shall meet every day at school, and I can tell you all my troubles there. Good-bye;" and she hastened from the room.

In a short time Flora had packed her trunk and was on her way to Mrs. Clark's humble abode, where peace and love awaited her.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DIAMOND BROOCH.

IT was a sad day for Flora when, released from the cares and excitement attendant upon her removal to and initiation in her new home, she found time to sit quietly down and think. Oh, how often dark, intruding thoughts will come to disturb our present peace—memories that come gurgling up from the past, with their sad pensive music, filling our ears with discordant notes and our hearts with an echoing wail of discontent!

She was seated by a little table in her own room, with her book opened before her. There was a storm abroad; the hail and the rain were beating violently against the panes. For the first time she realized her unpleasant position, and how very disagreeable it would be to go on foot and unattended the long distance that lay between the school and her present home on such an evening as this. The wind whistled drearily around the clapboards of the dilapidated old building, and still her thoughts ran on. Had she been wise in throwing off ease and position to gratify a spirit of independence which so many of her friends had chosen to condemn, and thereby lose that affection which had been so precious to her? Kitty, to be sure, was still hers; the same friendly smile was sure to greet her each morning, as they met; there was the same soft pressure of the hand, as they joined each other in their various classes; yet it could not be denied that somewhat of reserve had sprung up between them which would not be removed. Tears dimmed the large, piercing eyes of the once happy Indian girl, and her head dropped heavily

upon the closed book before her. Then came those sweetly soothing words which had so often been whispered into her ear during the last few weeks:

“I love you, Flora; be a sister to my precious child, and we will all be happy together.”

Ah! why had she thrown away such a priceless gem, such unselfish love? But it was gone, and in its place there stood a demon of anger, mocking her with its poisoning face and its terrible gestures.

Then there was another, a tall form, a noble heart, whose kindly sympathy and tender affection had often beamed upon her from a pair of dark, soul-stirring eyes, that had spoken to her a brother's love when his lips moved not. But why should she think of him? He had warned her of her folly, and advised her with earnest solicitations. All were gone. One by one the closely entwining fibres of her earthly happiness had been snapped asunder ere she was aware that her own life had become encircled by them. Yes, they were gone—all gone; and far back among the ruins, the scattered ruins, of her short-lived joys, she beheld the broken links of a dearer love. Edgarton, the pale-faced Englishman, had snapped the gilded chain that his own hand had woven, and its fragments were now lying in the dust, to be trampled at last out of sight for ever by the iron heel of certainty.

A gentle tap upon the half-open door announced Mrs. Clark, who held in her hand a delicate sealed note.

“A boy is below waiting for your answer,” she said, handing it to Flora.

Oh, how her heart beat with inexpressible joy as she recognized in the superscription the well-known handwriting of Mrs. Lane!

“Please tell him I will be down soon,” she said, as she eagerly broke the seal. Ah! why does the cheek, so lately aglow with excitement, turn suddenly pale, and her eyes grow dim, as she sinks motionless down upon the chair?

The cup is full at last; drop after drop has been added to the bitter draught, until, trembling, shrinking, her young spirit quails faintly from the appalling potion. A deep groan reached the ear of Lura, who was sitting in an adjoining room, busily plying her needle and reveling in the mystic dance of her own bright fancies. Hastily throwing down the work, she rushed in, just in time to catch the fainting girl as she fell, apparently lifeless, to the floor. A smothered cry of surprise escaped her lips, as she beheld the upturned face; but at that moment her eye fell upon the paper clasped tightly in the hand of the excited girl. Feeling assured, at a glance, that this was the cause of her distress, she snatched it from her, and read as follows:

“FLORA: It grieves me to write these lines to one I so lately thought pure and guileless, but duty prompts me to action, and I cannot hesitate. It may save a deluded girl from a lifetime of ignominy and shame. The little diamond brooch, Kitty’s birthday present from her father while you were here, has been missing since your departure. Unwilling to suspect you of so great a crime as the loss of this much valued trinket might suggest, we have for the last three days sought diligently for it, but, as you well know, unsuccessfully. Kitty remembers perfectly placing it upon your toilet at your last interview, and Mary, the chambermaid, while passing your door a few moments afterward, saw it in your hand. These circumstances have finally brought us to the unwilling conclusion that you still have it in your possession. Poor deluded girl! Return it to me by the bearer of this note, and for the sake of the love I once bore you nothing more shall be said of it.

“Yours, in haste,

“C. C. LANE.”

“Fiend!” hissed Lura through her pale lips, while she furiously crumpled the paper in her hand, as the burning

flood of hatred once more leaped from her piercing gray eye. "I'll answer this note before that poor girl recovers to prevent me. Yes, I'll answer it;" and suiting the action to her resolution, in a few moments she had penned these lines:

"Cruel woman! The curse of a just God shall rest upon you, for you have offended one of the purest and loveliest of his chosen ones, who lies pale and lifeless upon the floor at my feet. She is innocent, and the Father whom she loves will avenge her wrongs."

Hastily she signed and sealed the little missive, and hurried with it down to the parlor, where Jim awaited a reply. In a few minutes after, Mrs. Clark and Lura had placed the insensible Flora upon the bed, and were busily engaged in restoring her to consciousness.

"It is strange," said the kind old lady, as she sat rubbing the cold hands with her wrinkled palms; "I did not know but she was well, or she should not have worked so busily all the morning, running up and down stairs, sweeping and dusting. And I am sure I heard her singing, or it might have been a bird upon the lilac bush;" and the kind-hearted soul wiped her eyes with the corner of her checked apron, then went busily on with her work.

"It's of no use," said Lura, placing the bottle of camphor upon the table; "there are no signs of returning consciousness, which I can see. You sit here, while I run for a physician;" and without waiting for a reply, she bounded out of the room, and hastily putting on Flora's bonnet and shawl, was soon in the street, pelted by the pitiless storm, which she heeded not, but ran with a quick step over the icy pavement. She was suddenly arrested by a voice exclaiming,

"Flora, why are you out in such a storm as this?"

As the speaker caught sight of the astonished face beneath the closely fitting bonnet, he started back in sur-

prise, and would have offered an apology, but was interrupted by Lura, who said,

"Your mistake is easily accounted for. But Flora is very ill; I was on my way for a physician."

"Flora is ill?" he repeated, with a start. "Return to your home; I will myself bring one in five minutes;" and as he perceived that she hesitated, he continued: "I am her friend; trust me."

Lura obeyed, and in a few minutes after, Doctor Hillman entered. Lura was at the door to receive him, when his companion whispered,

"Permit me to send a messenger occasionally to bring news of her."

Lura bowed permission, and then followed the physician up the narrow stairway.

A full half-hour more elapsed before the large, dreamy eyes of Flora opened slowly, then looked wildly around.

"Where is it?" she asked, in a low voice, of Lura, who was standing over her.

"Safe; I have it. No one has seen it."

"Thank you." Then the long, dark lashes drooped again upon the pale cheek, and her lips trembled as if agitated by some inward struggle.

"A slow nervous fever," said the doctor to the inquiring looks of Mrs. Clark. "We must keep her very quiet for a few days, while Miss Edwards exercises her skill at nursing."

Lura started, and for the first time recognized in the speaker their old family physician, who had attended her father some years before, during a severe illness.

"I hope I may be very successful," she replied, endeavoring to appear unmoved; but her voice trembled slightly, and the glow upon her cheek deepened into a crimson hue and suffused her neck and face.

"How provoking!" she muttered, as the door closed behind him. "But it is over now. I shall no doubt, after

this lapse of time, be left to enjoy my misery unmolested."

There was bitter irony in her last words, but it was soon forgotten, as Mrs. Clark left the room, and Flora's eyes were once more fixed with an appealing look upon her face.

"Do not distress yourself," she said, stooping to kiss the pallid brow. "I answered that hateful note by asserting your innocence, of course; and as it will soon be found, nothing more will be thought of it."

"But what if it should not?" murmured the sick girl. "What if some unlucky chance should have forever removed it from sight? Oh, Lura, I cannot always bear about with me such a body of death; I should sink beneath the dreadful weight." A convulsive sob broke from her overburdened heart, and her pale lips once more took on their ashy hue.

"Flora, Flora," exclaimed the agitated girl, "you must not! Where is the trust you have placed in that kind and merciful Being to whom you daily apply the endearing appellation 'Father,' and who you have taught me to believe never leaves or forsakes his helpless ones? Do you not love Him to-day, Flora? and will He not be grieved at your distrust of His paternal care? You are innocent, my precious bird, and God will bring light out of this great darkness."

"I know it," answered a feeble, murmuring voice. "But oh, it is midnight to my soul; I cannot see through the thick gathering gloom."

"You will, Flora; but you must not talk. I will take your Bible and read to you. Shall I?"

For a long time Lura continued to read the words of hope and promise, which fell like golden sunbeams across the dark, gloomy future of a sorrowing heart, unmindful that the soothing opiate her hands had administered had taken effect, and that the grief-stricken Flora now lay quietly sleeping upon her pillow, dreaming, perhaps, of a rude but

quiet home upon the mountain-side, where the dense forest shut out the world and the birds sung all day long in the dark green branches above her. Perhaps a dark-eyed warrior stood before her, and breathed once more into her ear the earnest words of unpolished love; or, it may be, memory had learned life's sweetest notes, and stealing softly within the curtain sleep had drawn around the agitating present, was filling up the passing moments with its delicious melody, for a smile played around the parted lips, and the rosy tint of joy suddenly appeared once more upon the pallid cheek.

"Beautiful, innocent sleeper!" murmured Lura, as she gently pressed her lips to the delicately formed hand that was clasped in her own. "Oh, how much better it would be for her happiness should she never wake again! Poor child! doomed to be the sport of changing fortune. I can almost find it in my heart to wish it might be so. Oh, what is life, that we should covet it? or death," she continued, with a shudder, "that we should not invoke it upon those we love?"

Ah! there are many hearts whose purest fountains have been poisoned in early life by harsh, cold words, by cruel taunts and jeers, which a long series of years have failed to eradicate. The bitter waters would ever and anon rise to the surface, choking good resolves and effectually submerging the best purposes of life. Lura often felt this, as she beheld the bitter spirit of hatred with which her childhood had been haunted rising up before her, and she longed for the gently penetrating influence of that religion which she saw shedding its silent power upon the daily life of her friend to drive it away. "Forgive as we forgive those who have trespassed against us." This petition, which every morning fell from her lips, had not as yet found its way, with all its mighty import, into that one dark chamber of her soul, and still she struggled on.

"Flora, you are certainly better this morning," said Lura,

for at least the third time, as she darted in and out of the little room to see if everything was in perfect order before the doctor came.

"Oh yes, much better," was the feeble response; "I shall soon be well and happy again," she added, with a faint smile.

A knock was heard. "The doctor is at the door; I will let him in;" and Lura bounded lightly down the stairs. In a few moments, however, she returned alone.

"Did you ever see anything half so beautiful?" and she held up a rare bouquet of flowers. "Isn't it magnificent? Why don't you scream or swoon, or perform some other ecstatic feat? I am sure you take it much too coolly. Why, my dear girl, you are weeping," she exclaimed, for the first time raising her eyes from the beautiful flowers to the face of her companion. "Forgive me;" and she kissed the pale face tenderly. "Why do you weep? Are you not pleased to receive such a beautiful gift? The giver no doubt thought to make you happy."

"Does he know—" A sob checked her utterance, and she buried her face in her hands and wept unrestrainedly.

"I do not know who sent them," replied Lura, in surprise. "A boy of mean appearance brought them to the door, inquired how you were, said these were for you, and left."

"Well do I know the giver," she replied, removing her hands and extending one toward the neglected flowers, whose perfume had filled the room, "and I also understand the kindness which prompted his noble heart. No, no; he does not think me the guilty creature which others would make me, or he would never have sent these pure visitors into my polluting presence."

A tiny slip of paper nestled among the leaves, which Flora opened with trembling hands.

"Flora, I heard you say once that these talked to you of heaven; converse freely with them, and be comforted."

There was no need of a signature. One alone in the

entire city could have written those words—one hand alone could have sent such consolation in her night of sorrow. Comforting angels seemed whispering to her through those half-opened leaves; and when, upon the succeeding morning, the messenger returned, bringing with him a basket of delicious fruit, he bore away the cheering intelligence that Flora was rapidly recovering.

“A visitor for you, Lura,” said Mrs. Clark, as toward evening she ascended to the room where the two girls were sitting, both silently communing with their own thoughts.

“For me!” exclaimed Lura, starting to her feet and turning suddenly pale.

“Yes; it is your brother, Lura. He seems anxious to see you, and says he will detain you but a moment from your sick friend, but that he must see you.”

“Very well; he shall see me;” and hastily throwing aside her work, she left the room.

“Is the path of our earthly existence to be filled up with such dark spots all along through life?” asked Flora, as her kind old friend took her seat in the chair vacated by Lura.

“My child, there is no spot so dark that hope does not shine upon it, unless we shut it out with our own willful hands; and if we do, why, we deserve to grope a while, that’s all. Isn’t it so?” she asked, kindly, taking the hand of the earnest questioner.

Lura found her brother standing in the centre of the little parlor, gazing around upon the humble furniture which it contained with an air of disgust amusing to behold, and the feeling of regret that he should have discovered her retreat vanished, as she looked upon him; and approaching, she extended her hand to bid him welcome. He started back, looked at her for a moment without speaking, then lisped:

“Phelura, will you leave this vulgar place and return to your home, where respect and position await you?” He

paused, retreated to the window, stroked fondly his petted chin and waited for an answer.

"I call no place vulgar where peace and happiness come to bind up and heal my heart. Humble and lowly it may be as the one I now call mine, but dearer far is it to me, with its present joys, than the one you offer, where sorrow and tears were my daily companions. No, Edgar, I will not return with you."

"Listen. I am sorry for you," he said, advancing and taking her hand; "you do not realize all that is before you. I am commissioned by our parents to inform you that if you now refuse their humble offer of forgiveness and a home, it will never again be proffered to you, and you, my sister, will never be recognized by them as a child, or even as an acquaintance. In this Lena bade me tell you she most heartily joined. Will you not reconsider your refusal?"

"And you—on which side of the terrible dividing gulf are you to stand?"

The old fire suddenly became relighted in her eyes, as she uttered these words, while a crimson glow dyed her cheeks with an unnatural hue.

"I—I—what—I?" stammered the bewildered youth. "Why, 'pon my word! I have not considered the matter fully. We never quarreled much, did we, sister? But, really," he continued, walking up in front of the little mirror and at the same time elevating his luminous top-knot with his taper fingers, "it will be very mortifying to own a poor seamstress in such a dilapidated hovel as this for a sister, it would indeed. I would much prefer to have you return home."

"But suppose I will not?" persisted Lura; "what then?"

"But you will?"

"No. Listen to me just a moment. As long ago as I can remember, when I was but a child, and before we came to this pleasant city, I have hid myself in some attic corner,

where no mortal eye or the keen darts of reproach could reach me, and then, in solitude, on bended knees, I have wept such bitter tears as childhood seldom knows. Then I have hated, and dwelt upon my wrongs until my brain grew mad and I tore my hair from my excess of grief. I said I hated. Yes. They scorned—despised me, and my sensitive nature recoiled before it, only to hug in its close embrace the stinging viper of hatred. I could not live in the midst of such a deadly combat. Heart and soul seemed withering beneath the angry looks and words of constant reproach. Others less sensitive than myself might have conformed to the demands of assumed superiors, and pass by what some might be pleased to call the penalty my appearance and position brought upon me. But I could not, and therefore I am here; and in the genial atmosphere of kindness and love, I feel my better nature growing stronger, and something within assures me I shall not always be, even to those who never proffered me affection, the neglected 'Fury' of former days. You may tell them, brother, to do by me and my connection with the family precisely as they choose. I will never return to the home that God and the laws of humanity gave me as my own of right, until I enter as the acknowledged equal of my more favored sister. This can never be done by any power which they possess. Therefore, for the present, I remain where I am."

"I know you were not treated right," said the young man, walking toward the door; "but it would take a good many harsh words to drive me down where you are. Cold looks from human eyes, it appears to me, would not be half so provoking as the stare of this stiff wooden furniture."

"Their gaze is friendly," said Lura, attempting to smile, "and does not awaken in my heart any feeling of anger."

The young man laughed, bowed low and left the house.

"I am alone now with you," said Lura, a few moments after, bending over Flora and kissing the pale upturned face. "You will be my sister. Oh, tell me, Flora, you will ever be my sister, will you not?"

"For ever," murmured Flora. "But what do you mean? They cannot—"

"Yes, the choice has been presented before me—dissolution of the family bonds or a return to my childhood's home. Flora, I am not quite dead to all affection for kindred—indeed, I do not hate, as I once did—and the severing has been more painful than I could have imagined. But it is all over now, and the broad future is before me. Back, back, unbidden tears!" and she pressed her hand upon her heart. "Such wounds as these cannot be healed by liquid drops."

And yet, when her head rested upon her pillow, did they continue to flow, and not until morning peeped in at the open window did her face assume its wonted smile, and cheerfulness once more settle down upon her drooping spirits.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DREAM FULFILLED.

IT was a chill, frosty autumnal evening when Lura entered the quaint old parlor with a lighted oil lamp, which she placed upon the small table drawn up before the brisk fire which crackled and blazed cheerfully upon the hearth.

“Now, Flora,” she said, filling the table with books and papers—“now for a feast of fat things. Here again we have found our fair Utopia—quite as pleasant, in my eyes, at least, as the one which we claimed for our own one year ago. No intruding eyes or voice will disturb us to-night. Mrs. Clark, good soul! says she wishes to doze over the kitchen fire unmolested, just because she knows that I am determined to finish copying this manuscript before I close my eyes in sleep. Hark! how soothingly the winds are swaying the leafless lilac bush under the window while its long, wiry fingers are playing a pleasing accompaniment upon the panes! Ah! there is sweet music to-night among the tall maples which surround ‘Pleasant Cottage’—sweet music that has often hushed the angry tempest within this heart, as I sat by my window and listened till the stars came out one by one and smiled ‘peace’ upon the troubled waters.”

“Do the winds never sigh plaintively to you, sad, moaning, dirge-like notes over the grave of the departed past?” inquired Flora, rising from the window where she had been sitting and taking a seat by the table.

“The soul tunes its own Eolian lyre, my precious one.”

"You are right. There are wailing notes in my heart, but I will not hear them. I wish I were not so sad. Ah! I was happy once, and sported with the howling winds as a child gambols in its play."

"And you will be happy again. You forget that old adage, made threadbare every year, yet by some mysterious power always ready for use, as good as if it were new—that 'it is always darkest just before day.'"

"Yet you will own that the morning seldom indulges in such a lengthy prelude," answered Flora, with a smile. "But I am not miserable, only a little perplexed and overshadowed—lost in a maze of mystery occasionally, that no doubt makes me appear sad while wandering in it. But now to your work, scribbler, and I to mine. Two different ladders we climb, Lura, but Fate shall not separate us when the topmost round of each is reached."

"Hark! some one knocks," exclaimed Lura, starting to her feet; "what a strange sound! It seems almost ghostly when heard so seldom."

"For Miss Hawes," said a blunt, coarse voice, when the door was opened, and Lura returned, bearing in her hand another large bouquet of flowers.

"If this isn't provoking!" she exclaimed, as she tossed them into Flora's lap. "This is the third floral gift which I have been obliged to pass over to you from my covetous nand in as many weeks. The very next time I meet that dark-eyed stranger—"

A deep groan from Flora silenced the lively mirth of the speaker, and the sentence remained unfinished. She had espied a folded paper among the flowers, as they fell upon her lap, and she was hurriedly reading:

"Flora, have you heard from your old friend Kitty Lane for the last few days? She is dangerously, hopelessly ill. No one is permitted to visit her but the afflicted family. I know this will grieve you, but felt constrained to send you

this information before the more terrible news should reach you; I will send you later intelligence early in the morning. Accompanying this sad news I send you more of those heavenly comforters, hoping they will now, as ever, lead your mind to the fadeless bloom of paradise where no sorrow ever intrudes. Good-night.

“L. A. FENN.”

“Oh, how can I endure this!” exclaimed the weeping girl, at the same time throwing the open letter to her companion. “If I were only positive that she did not think me the guilty one that circumstances seem determined to make me! But she will die—oh yes, she will die!—and I shall never know that she does not secretly despise me. And I love her so well. O God! this is the hardest part of my great trial;” and she raised her clasped hands imploringly upward. “This, this is the chastening rod of iron. Give me strength, great God, to bear it meekly, as I should!”

Her hands fell, her head drooped and rested upon the table before her, while her whole frame shook with violent agitation.

“He will answer your prayer,” said Lura, reverently, laying her hand upon the bowed head. “Do not weep; wait, ‘stand still and behold the salvation of the Lord.’ He has not led you into this dark place to leave you to perish. No, no, Flora, my mental faith seems greater than your spiritual. If I were as sure of a Father’s love, it appears to me I could never doubt Him.”

Then, as if fearing the effect of her words, she threw herself upon her knees beside her, clasped her hand, exclaiming,

“Flora, do I add to your grief by my thoughtless philosophizing? Oh, believe me, I share in your sorrows more than I can express. Yet I never was taught how to apply the balm of sympathy, having never been blessed until I saw you with an application of its healing power.”

"I do not doubt you, my precious friend," said Flora, throwing her arms around the suppliant; "I love you too well to weigh your words in the scale of appreciation. I thank you for them. My poor vision has a proneness to wander about beneath the dark clouds, rather than to penetrate their thick, sombre folds. Dear, dear Kitty," she cried, with a shudder; "where is her faith? Where will she look for consolation in this trying hour? Ah! how well I remember our conversation the last night I spent with her! I had been kneeling beside my bed before retiring; and when I arose, she whispered, 'The attitude of prayer is very becoming to one of your form and nun-like appearance, but how would I look upon my knees?' Perceiving her words shocked me, she continued, 'But when I get older, I presume I shall not mind those simple things; then I will take you for my pattern, and be very good.' Oh, that was not quite five weeks ago, and where is she now?"

"Perhaps she may recover," suggested Lura, as she saw the tears again commence to flow.

"No. You remember the dream I told you about? How very soon she forgot it! 'Only an idle dream,' she would say, when I mentioned it, 'yet so pretty, one could almost wish it true.'"

The neglected, forgotten flowers lying at her feet sent up their delicious odors, and Flora, clasping them to her heart, exclaimed, "Precious links, which bind heaven and earth together in an inseparable union, how I bless you!"

Manuscripts and books had for a while been forgotten in the intrusion of this new grief, but Lura soon returned to her seat at the table, and Flora, fearing she might disturb her, soon arose, kissed her good-night and retired to her own room.

No eye but the never-slumbering one beheld the unhappy girl, as she tossed upon her bed in restless anxiety through the long hours of that never-to-be-forgotten night; no ear

but the one that never becomes weary heard her prayers and listened to the cries of that pleading heart for the departing one.

Morning came, and her eyes were red with weeping, while her brain throbbed wildly from her long, sleepless vigil. It was yet early, although the frugal breakfast had been eaten, and Flora was busily engaged in her morning labors, when a gentle knock was heard at the door. With a trembling step she hurried to open it, but started back with surprise when she beheld Mr. Fenn standing before her. She greeted him, however, with a pleasant smile, and bade him enter. As they stepped into the little parlor, he took her hand in his, led her to a chair and seated himself beside her. There was no need that words should convey the sad tidings which his large, dark eyes, as they met hers, spoke; she read the fearful word "Death," and her beating heart had throbbed its low response.

After some moments' silence, Mr. Fenn said,

"I could trust the sad intelligence to no other lips than mine, for with it I bear the last message."

"To me?" asked Flora, in surprise.

"Yes, to you. She loved you, and almost the last words she spoke were, 'Tell her I believe her as guiltless of the crime with which our family charged her as I am myself. Oh that I could tell her so!' she exclaimed, with a feeble voice; 'but you will?' I promised, but in a few moments she added, 'When I get well, I will not neglect it longer; she thinks I believe it, because I could not endure the thought of paining her sensitive heart by mentioning the subject.'"

"Thank God!" exclaimed Flora, with intense emotion — "thank God that my prayers were not in vain."

Tears came fast, and she bowed her head to conceal them. Tenderly he drew her toward him, placed her bowed head upon his shoulder, then continued:

"After despatching those few lines to you last evening, I

returned to the sorrow-stricken family, who have for the last two days been unwilling that I should leave them. Soon after entering the drawing-room, Mrs. Lane came in, smiling with renewed hope, as she informed me that her darling was much better. The seamstress, Anna, had an hour before brought home the dress which she was to have worn to-night at the quarterly hop. When told that it had come, she requested it to be brought to her room. 'It's very pretty,' she said, looking intently at it. 'How sweetly we should have all looked, dressed alike, in the garland dance! but I shall not be there. Lay it away carefully,' she continued; 'I shall yet wear it. The eleven will miss me, but Flora must take my place. I wonder why she would not join us?' 'And then she talked on,' said the unhappy mother, 'until I could but feel that my child, my idol, would not leave us. But I came to see if you were here,' she continued, after a moment's pause, as if recollecting herself; 'she asked for you, and bade me invite you to her room as soon as you returned.' I followed her. Beside the bed sat the family physician, and one look into his troubled face told me there was no hope—no hope. 'Leave me,' she said, waving her hands to the occupants of the room; 'I would speak with Mr. Fenn alone.' Then, as I sat beside her, she gave me the message for you which I have just delivered. At midnight she began to fail, and just as the morning dawned Kitty Lane, the petted, the idolized child, was no more.'"

Flora raised her head, and repeated, "The petted, the idolized, is no more, while I, the stranger and the outcast, still live. Oh, why could I not have died in her stead? How much misery would have been saved!"

"Flora, I will never forgive you if you repeat those dreadful words." Then, speaking more tenderly, he added, "You know not all the misery such a death would cause. But is there nothing more you would like to know?"

"Oh yes; tell me everything. How do they bear it?"

Just then Lura came singing along the narrow passage, and with a hurried step entered the room. Flora stammered out a short introduction, as Lura, blushing with astonishment, first saw them, then with as rapid an apology retired.

"Who is that young lady? I did not understand the name," asked Mr. Fenn.

"Did you never see her before?"

"Never."

"Her name is Edwards. She is a sister of the fair Lena, and the same person of whom you inquired of me."

"Is it possible? I have heard that she was a fright—ugly to look upon; while, on the contrary, I think her quite pretty and the possessor of a very intellectual face."

No doubt his thoughts were wandering back to the time when he had heard the "poor sister" spoken of, for he sat some minutes without speaking. Rising to depart, he said,

"The funeral is to take place the day after to-morrow, in St. John's Church. Shall I come for you in my carriage?"

"I walk farther daily to my school," she replied, with a faint smile; but seeing his injured look, she added, "But you are very kind, and it will give me much pleasure to accept your invitation."

The burial of Kitty Lane cast a gloom over a large portion of the city, and at an early hour the church was filled to overflowing with sympathizing friends, who had come to witness the last sad ceremonies over the departed dead.

At four o'clock the bell from the lofty tower commenced its deep, muffled tolling, which rang out upon the still autumnal air with solemn distinctness—"gone—gone—gone"—and from the summit of Mount Ida there echoed back the same heavy sepulchral tone: "Gone—gone—gone!"

It was a sad day, and none in that vast assembly who sat

and listened to the mournful vibration of the bell, as the solemn cortege advanced, felt the oppressive gloom more than Flora. Slowly the approaching footsteps are heard in the distance; nearer and nearer they come, a shadow falls across the open doorway, and with slow, measured step the clergyman in his long black robe walks up the aisle, followed by four men bearing the richly ornamented coffin, covered with a heavy velvet pall.

On one side walk six young girls, dressed in pure white, ornamented with flowers, while upon the opposite are only five similarly arrayed.

"There! there are the eleven who were to miss her from the dance," thought Flora, as she looked at them through her blinding tears; "and here they come, walking by the side of the departed, arrayed as for the picture dance." Oh how her heart rejoiced that she was not one of the number!

The services were commenced and finished amid sobs of grief and loud lamentations. Flora, however, sat like one wrapped in a mysterious dream, from which she did not awake until she heard the invitation for all who wished to take a farewell look upon the lifeless one, when with the rest she moved toward the coffin, as the orchestra chimed a low, solemn dirge over the dead lying there at rest.

Flora started back with an exclamation of surprise, as her eye fell upon the pallid face. There was the missing one—the number was complete, twelve, arrayed in robes of white, with garlands twined about their brows and flowers elaborately decking their persons, but one—ah! one would never again join the merry circle, her feet never more skip in the fairy-like dance. No, the number was broken, the eleven must go on without her!

Flora turned away, pale and sick at heart, and soon the sad procession was wending its way to the distant cemetery of Mount Ida, and the echoes from its sides again sent back the refrain, "Gone—gone—gone!"

"Ashes to ashes and dust to dust," began the reverend preacher, as the coffin was lowered into its silent resting-place; then, as the prayer was ended, and before the clods fell heavily down upon the coffin, the little band in white came forward, plucked the withering garlands from their brows, and cast them as a last tribute of their love down in the cold dark chamber where she must now sleep alone.

"Oh, I cannot leave her here—I cannot!" almost shrieked the despairing mother, as the relentless spades once more commenced their unfeeling work. "Stop, heartless, cruel men! She is my all—my life! She shall not remain here!" and the broken-hearted mother darted forward, as if to arrest the labor; but an arm was thrown about her, and a voice whispered in her ear,

"Dear aunt, let us go home and weep together in her room—the room which she has made sacred to us by death!"

"Oh, Harry, Harry! Yes, you loved her. My boy, let us go home;" and taking his arm, they walked slowly back to the carriage.

Every eye was suffused with tears, beholding that proud, beautiful woman bowed down and almost crushed beneath the weight of her mighty sorrow, and every heart throbbed with a sympathy which it could not utter.

No, there was one whose eyes stared with a wild, bewildered look upon the scene before him. No tears dimmed his vision, no cries of lamentation escaped his lips, but his cheeks were deathly pale, and his head drooped low upon his breast. This was the father, whose heart was crushed and bleeding from the dreadful blow which his nature had not the power to endure.

"Come, uncle," said Harry, returning to the place where he stood; "the carriage is waiting for you."

He cast one long, lingering look upon the new-filled grave, then, with a shudder, walked away.

"Oh, this is dreadful!" exclaimed Flora, covering her

face with her hands and weeping bitterly. "This is indeed a torturing sight. How lonely that elegant home will be!"

"Yes," said Mr. Fenn, musingly, "but poor Harry—my heart bleeds for him. He loved the beautiful girl more than his own life. Ah, Flora! you do not know what it is to have the light of your earthly existence suddenly extinguished. God grant you never may!"

Flora started. His voice was so full of anguish, of unutterable woe, that she forgot her own grief, and laying her hand compassionately upon his, looked the sympathy words could not utter.

"Thank you, noble girl," he exclaimed, raising it to his lips; "it was only a transient meteor which shot up from the past. See, I am the same cold-hearted bachelor as before."

Flora sadly smiled, and they rode on.

"May I not call when I choose?" asked Mr. Fenn, as the carriage door opened before the humble cottage.

"What! here?" asked Flora, pointing to the dilapidated building.

"Yes, here, where you have chosen your home."

"Yes, as often as you choose," was the whispered reply.

He bowed, and rode away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"THORNY WAY."

"CHRISTMAS—a merry Christmas!" fell from a thousand rosy lips, and a thousand bounding hearts beat more quickly, as they echoed the joyous shout, and hailed with mirthful glee the bright, clear morning of that festive day. Eyes danced and sparkled with a joy that childhood only knows, while wondering over the priceless gems that had been secretly stowed away in numberless little stockings by the jolly saintly visitor of that eventful eve, and silvery laughter made sweet music in many a merry home.

The sun rose higher and brighter, scattering over a fresh white carpet of snow a profuse shower of dazzling rays, which sported everywhere, peeping into every blushing young face that glided along amid a chorus of noisily ringing bells, and the troop of tiny feet upon the newly-swept pavement. Life, active, busy life, was everywhere—in the humble cot, in the lonely dwelling of poverty, in the bylanes and in the bustling thoroughfares, in the homes where plenty dwelt and in the palaces of affluence where luxury reigned.

Lena Edwards lay upon the pillow and listened; but the door of her heart was closed, and pleasure could not reach the silvery chords shut out from its playful touch. A few hours before, smiles had been upon those lips, through which issued melodious words, freshly laden with sympathy and affection, but now despondency compressed them, and the purest fountain of her woman's nature had ceased to send up its sparkling waters.

Even now, in that little back parlor, stood the Christmas tree, upon whose branches hung many mementoes of family love, which had been the centre of attraction the evening before to a small group of particular friends of the fair Lena and her fascinating brother. Mr. Fenn had not been forgotten, and, what was quite as much to the point, his memory had not on the present occasion proved treacherous.

“One branch alone remains unadorned,” said Lena to her companion, as she leaned upon his arm, soon after they entered the illuminated room. “You perceive it is crooked and ill-shapen, but its present loneliness and neglect throws a gloom over the whole brilliant picture.”

Her voice trembled, and her dove-like eyes were cast pensively down.

“Ill-shapen as the branch appears to be, you did not sever it,” suggested Mr. Fenn, looking intently into her face.

“Sever it?” she exclaimed, with a sudden start. “See how closely I nestle to it;” and she placed her jeweled hand upon a contiguous well-filled branch.

“Then permit me to unite them inseparably,” he replied, throwing over the misshapen bough a heavy chain of gold wrought with the most exquisite workmanship, and looping it gracefully over the one upon which her delicate hand had rested. It was a little act, for “Lena” was inscribed upon the jeweled clasp, and as she lay upon her pillow, and heard the sounds of mirth and rejoicing which came up from the crowded streets, she held the beautiful gift firmly in her hand and felt, “It is mine.” Yet the retrospect of the evening troubled her, she knew not why. Perhaps it was her jealous love intimating, “All is not right.”

A happier waking for years old Mrs. Clark had not known than on this Christmas morn. “A merry Christmas!” “A merry Christmas!” shouted gleeful voices, as the door of her room was thrown open at an early hour to

admit the light from the burning candle standing upon the kitchen table.

"Threescore more of them to you!" answered the low, sweet voice from beneath the curtain. A kiss from each upon her pale, wrinkled face, that was slowly turned to them, caused her to wish a long, happy life to her dear children and unnumbered blessings to deck their pathway.

"Now you must get up immediately," said Flora. "Breakfast is ready, and we are waiting impatiently to adorn you for our noonday feast;" and the two girls lifted her from the bed and placed her in an easy-chair, while she laughed and scolded in the same breath, declaring there never were such girls—she didn't see how she could ever have lived there all alone, waiting for the weeks to roll round and bring her truant brother, "who would keep going down in that dirty boat, when there was no sort of need of it, not a bit!"

"Where on airth did you get these?" she asked, noticing for the first time that she was being robed in something altogether new.

"Wait until we brush the silvery locks and don the cap; then we will let you wonder," said Lura, laughing, as she proceeded with her work.

"Well, I never!" and the submissive old lady settled down with a contented look.

"Lura did it all," said Flora, as the two girls after breakfast led the captive off to the little parlor, where a bright, warm fire greeted her.

There was sadness upon Flora's face as she named the donor, but her heart whispered that "she had done what she could," and therefore she was content.

A short time after, a sleigh drawn by two spirited horses stopped before the humble home, and Anna Graves, the pale seamstress, alighted, together with her mother, who was assisted by the daughter and the driver, and in a few

moments a cheerful group were cosily chatting in the antiquated parlor which Edgar Edwards had scarcely deigned to enter.

"You are so much better," said Flora, as she drew Mrs. Graves close to the fire.

"Yes; God is very good. The cold weather, contrary to ordinary expectation, seems to bring me new life. This ride has made me feel young again. I wanted to see that young man to bless him for his kindness, but you will tell him how much I thank him?"

"Yes, I will tell him," replied Flora, blushing slightly, "but Mr. Fenn has a noble heart, and enjoys doing a kindness more than one can receiving it."

All, however, had not yet arrived. A timid knock was heard upon the door, which Flora opened, and little Clara Saunders bounded in, threw her arms about Flora's neck and covered her face with kisses.

"She said I might stay all day," were her first eager words, when she found breath to speak; "she was so kind, after all, wasn't she?"

"Very kind," answered Flora, looking into that young face, where all was not as sunny as early morn should be. But it was "a merry Christmas" to all who ate and drank beneath that lowly roof; and when the beautiful sleigh once more stopped before the weatherbeaten gate to carry the visitors to their home, Mrs. Graves' voice trembled as she said, "Good-bye"—trembled because she had been speaking of partings, and she saw a tear glisten in her daughter's calm blue eye.

The mirth and joy that accompany this annual holiday entered not into the stately mansion of Mrs. Lane, as it was wont to do, filling the spacious rooms with circling eddies of silvery laughter, and the trip of agile feet upon its velvet carpets, for the shadow of death still lingered upon the threshold, and cast a pall of gloom over all its interior splendor. To be sure, there were footsteps upon the

broad, winding stairways and through the long halls, but they were measured and slow, such as bear along the weary and heavy-laden. Grim visages from the scenes of long-ago looked soberly down from their lofty positions upon the walls into the empty rooms, with their eyes fixed wonderingly upon the richly-covered furniture reflected in gorgeous mirrors, and their gaze was cold, cheerless and forbidding.

A stately lady in long, flowing black robes entered the neglected, dreary rooms and proceeded with languid step to the window that opened upon the busy, bustling street. A shiver passed through her frame, as she beheld the fleecy snow and the icy pendants which the frost had hung upon the leafless branches of the stiff old trees opposite. Her face was very pale—white as the one over which winter had thrown his chilling mantle, silently sleeping in her lonely bed on the summit of yonder hill.

"Ah! we were to have been in New York to-day," sighed the unhappy lady, still gazing listlessly out, but looking above the happy faces that were hurrying to and fro, mindless of the great sorrow that hovered so near them. "Yes, to-day three months ago, how we showered the purple fruit of anticipation into these now miserable hours! How much worse—ininitely worse—than the apples of Sodom, do they prove to us in this wretched present! Poor Harry! It was cruel to forbid his loving her, while I now almost rejoice at his sufferings. We grieve together. Poor boy!" and tears came into her large blue eyes, and the scene before her became enveloped in mist.

Mr. Lane sat alone in his library. Life had lost its charms for the bereaved father, and business cares, with the excitement of loss and gain, had ceased to interest him. All day long he sat, moody and alone, neither giving nor receiving consolation.

Harry Walton had been recalled from New York. He alone had power to hide his great grief and step forth into

the world, yet his merry laugh was hushed, and the sparkling light of his dark eyes had become dim. At this hour he too was alone in an upper chamber, seated before a table which he had drawn near the fire, upon which lay a number of open letters. He had been reading them, and one was still in his hands.

"What a strange dream!" he murmured. "How I laughed at her in my answer! Dear, dear Kitty! My heart is full of sweet memories of thee, and with these will I ever cover the cruel work of the destroyer's hand. Yes, you shall ever be mine—my idol of the past, always enshrined in the present by the power of my unutterable love!" A groan from his stricken heart, the firm pressure of his clenched hand upon his burning brow, told plainly the agony of that grief which lay concealed beneath the disguise of external calmness when the world looked on, but which was never hidden from himself.

The day, which had risen in splendor, wrapped in glittering robes of morning light, disappeared, mantled in a dark, portentous cloud, and the wind came moaning up from behind the eastern hills, and sighed all night through the deserted streets and narrow alleys where the child of poverty lay shivering in his rags, his hand grasping tightly some meagre gift which had been tossed at him, and he dreamed of such joys, haply, as the giver never knew. Life, life! Strange links are bound together in it, but the hand of wisdom unites them.

For nearly a week the rain came pattering down upon the retreating snow and ice, and the grand old Hudson heaved his throbbing heart with a new life, throwing off his icy coverlet, and appeared once more, aroused from his short sleep, mighty in his power. Men shrugged their shoulders and looked prophetic, while they barricaded the warehouses upon the banks of the river and strengthened the fastenings of the restless sloops which now crowded around the piers. A great freshet was expected; but the

clouds kindly withheld their moisture, the winds ceased their strange, mysterious whisperings in the tree-tops, and the new year burst upon the gladdened city in a flood of golden light.

Mr. Fenn called upon Flora early in the morning merely to bring a new book—"the last publication, which he was sure would prove a rich treat."

"I have heard so much of it," he said, "that yesterday morning I purchased it, and confess to the weakness of having taken half of the night to finish its perusal. The writer has marked talent, and her imagery is fascinating beyond expression."

Flora, thanking him, rushed up to Lura's room to show her the wonderful book. "If Mr. Fenn bestows such praise, you need not fear for its triumphant march. Oh, Lura, Lura!"

"Fury, you mean," said Lura, catching the contagious rejoicing of her companion. "I wonder if any one will recognize my poor heroine?"

The good sloop *Lady Ann* had been quietly resting in her snug winter-quarters for the past few weeks, but now she tossed and bounded upon the heaving waters, as if she had been quite impatient of her short imprisonment, and longed to spread her wings and fly forth once more into life, active, busy life. But her jolly old captain and owner, who had just returned from a trip about the country, devoted to the settlement of the odds and ends of his extensive business, was not yet ready; and while his pet was restlessly tossing her long arms into the air, jostling the neighboring craft like an impertinent miss elbowing her way through a crowd, he was sitting by the kitchen fire cosily chatting with his sister.

"See, Uncle Billy," said Flora, as the two girls entered the room, while she held up the new book—"see my New Year's gift, 'Thorny Way,' by nobody knows who, yet pronounced by the most acute judges one of the most entertain-

ing and fascinating works that has been published for a long time;" and her beautiful eyes glistened and her cheeks glowed with a delight she had not known for many weeks.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the merry old man, at the same time elevating his heavy, shaggy eyebrows, which in repose almost buried the small, gray eyes that twinkled beneath them, while his large, brawny hand came emphatically down upon his knee with a report sufficiently loud to awaken the most sluggish sympathy.

"Didn't I know it? up with the top-sail. Fine coasting now for the little craft," he exclaimed, with the heartiest good-humor. "Ha, ha! Any man who will patronize the captain of the *Lady Ann* in preference to any other skipper will be true to his word—no fear of it; and he told me he would warrant for it a good sale, which I knew all the time meant a capital thing. 'Just what the public wants,' and so forth! Ha, ha, my fine birds! Billy Price can see into a millstone as far as it is picked, any day;" and his deep-chested laugh awakened the echoes that always slept in the dingy old garret when he was not beneath the roof. All joined in the lively chorus, for all were equally filled with rejoicing.

To this day had they long looked forward with the keenest anxiety. Hope and fear had been alternating in quick succession in each heart since Lura's manuscript, the work of many months, had been placed in the hands of the publishers. She had seen its publication announced in several journals, but her heart often sank within her, as she thought of the unsparing criticism which it might receive; and now to know that it had been praised by the press, what was better than all for her, by their mutual friend, Mr. Fenn, perfected her vague anticipations with the most pleasing realities.

"I say, chick, what are you going to do with your money?" continued Uncle Billy, placing his hand affectionately upon Lura's head. "No doubt there will be a

heap of it." This he said, as the sonorous laugh died away and the echoes were once more silent.

"Going to school," answered Lura, clapping her hands with glee, as the bright prospect rose up before her—"going to school; and perhaps I shall write another book some day."

"Well, now, child! Gone crazy so quick? And perhaps I am the cause of it," said Uncle Billy, with feigned grief sitting ludicrously upon his countenance. "There's no more need of your going to school than there is of my becoming second mate of the *Lady Ann*. You may laugh"—and he pointed his finger at Lura, while the shaggy eyebrows rose up like a thick cloud to let the stars peep out—"but you know more now than half of the fine ladies that have been clean through a dozen schools."

Not wishing to contest the point, Lura thanked him for his flattering opinion of her acquirements, and the brother and sister were left to chat undisturbed.

Toward evening, Anna Graves called—"just for one moment," as she said; but the church bells began their evening chorus of invitation before she was aware that the lamps had been lighted in the streets, and that night had already drawn her thick curtains around her. She arose in haste to depart; but after much persuasion and a promise from Uncle Billy that he would see that she reached home safely, she consented to accompany the little party to church down town, where a marriage ceremony was to be performed.

The church was crowded when they entered with the gay, the thoughtless and the curious—the lady of fashion, the man of business and the daily laborer, while here and there, scattered among the motley group, was a humble, silent worshiper, from whose trusting heart ever arose upward to the throne of purity and love the sweet incense of acceptable praise.

Then came the low, deep tones of the organ, reverberating through the consecrated temple, now rising and soaring in

lofty swell, then sinking in a mild, sweet cadence and melting away as the music of far-off waters which the passing winds gather up and bring back to us with redoubled sweetness, filling the ears and elevating the thoughts until the whole being seems enveloped and baptized in an overhanging cloud of liquid sounds.

Flora felt the influence of the melody with which she was surrounded, and her head bowed low in adoration of Him who "fills the air with His praises, that the heart of man may rejoice in Him."

The prelude died away, and the voice of prayer arose upon the surrounding stillness. Fervent and more fervent became the appeals of the humble pleader, who stood with hands upraised to Him who says, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Suddenly a loud cry is heard. "Fire! fire! fire!" comes with awful distinctness through the closed door, rings through the long aisles, recalling devotional thoughts from their heavenward flight, and filling every listener with an apprehensive dread of evil.

"Fire! fire! fire!" Louder and nearer and clearer it comes. Hurrying footsteps rapidly approach, then die away in the distance. Bells from every church-tower and spire commence their clamorous alarms, and the whole congregation arise from their seats and rapidly rush out from the church.

"Let us go," whispered Anna, as she perceived that her companions made no movement to depart. "Oh, let us go!"

"Why, dear Anna, what makes you so pale?" eagerly inquired the girls almost in the same breath, "and you are trembling violently. What frightens you so much?"

"Let us go," she pleaded, while the tears started to her eyes; "I cannot endure this agonizing suspense. Oh, how I repent unnecessarily leaving my poor dear mother so long!"

They had reached the door, and the noise and confusion from without broke in upon them. The tumult of hurry-

ing feet, the loud shouting of an excited multitude, the distant rumbling of the engines, together with the clangor of numberless bells, mingled with the murmurs of inquiry and alarm which fell incoherently from the lips of passers by, filled the air with discord and the heart with unutterable fear.

"What is it? What is it?" was heard upon every side. No flames were visible, and "false alarm" was sounded in the ear, yet the crowd hurried on, all tending in one direction, and thither our little party was borne.

"Can you tell me, sir, where the fire is?" inquired Uncle Billy, grasping the arm of a stalwart man who was hurrying past, screaming at the top of his voice, "Fire! fire! fire!"

"There ain't no fire," he answered, endeavoring to release himself, "but Ida hill has tumbled down and buried half the city."

"Let us sit down here," said Flora, as she perceived that Anna's arm, which was placed within hers, trembled more violently, but before the stranger had finished his reply, she had darted away, and was lost in the crowd.

"What shall we do?" exclaimed Flora, while Lura only clasped her hand in mute surprise.

"You must take care of yourselves, girls," said Uncle Billy, turning to them; "my broad, rough hands are wanted, if his words are true, and you had better find Anna, if possible, and take her home with you."

But in vain. Hours came and went, and hundreds of persons continued unceasingly their labor of love and sympathy. Fourteen houses had been thrown down, buried or carried along by the descending earth and trees from the hill above them, while the moans of the injured and dying were distinctly heard in many places, and a few were borne away to safe retreats still alive.

Where was Anna? The crowd was dense and the night dark, save where the torches illuminated the scene of toil, and the poor girl could not be found.

"Here, here! more hands to this beam!" shouted a voice; and the loose earth rattled, the timbers creaked—a crash, and the intruding beam was dislodged.

A shriek, heartrending in its agony, pierced the air, and Anna leaped forward to clasp the form of her dear mother in her arms. Spades and iron bars stopped a while in their active work, while many a toil-stained hand was raised to wipe away a tear, as the two forms, both cold and insensible to present grief, were borne away. A Bible lay open near the little table which was crushed beneath the mother, and a little farther on, bowed over a chair, was another form, dead. The faithful servant who had clung for many years through sorrow and adversity to the kind mistress of former days had joined her in her journey to that celestial abode where there is no more fear of separation.

Happy soul! The answering angel who bore upward on his ethereal wings the sweet odors of prayer from the humble and contrite heart proclaimed also to the blood-washed throng in the courts above, "They come, they come!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MASSIVE FOB-CHAIN.

THE frail forget-me-not that blooms alone down in the grassy dell oftentimes droops its fragile head when the wind and the rain beat too heavily upon it; but when the storm is past, and the genial sunshine comes and kisses away the heavy teardrops that weigh it down, invigorating with warm, soft breath its little life, the drooping head is raised, and the tiny flower becomes once more the loveliest in nature's collection.

Thus did Anna, after a few weeks of dejection, find among the dregs of sorrow's most bitter cup, a soothing draught which the angelic hand of Hope had added, that calmed and tranquilized her afflicted heart; and rising from her grief, she walked once more in the world, the pale young seamstress of former days.

The spring had come and gone. The tall lilac bush had budded and bloomed, filling the air with its aromatic sweets, and the little vase upon the parlor table had been filled with its bright, cheering donations, but now its blossoms had withered, fragrance had departed, and the hot rays of a summer's sun rested upon its dusty green leaves. Twilight was approaching, and Lura, robed in plain white, was standing in the door, looking wistfully down the street.

"I wish she would come," she exclaimed, half impatiently. "The biscuits will certainly be spoiled."

Footsteps fell upon her ear from a quarter opposite to that in which she was looking, and her eyes suddenly turned, to behold a gentleman and lady slowly approach-

ing. Her first glance met the steady gaze of her fair sister, who was leaning listlessly upon the arm of her exquisite brother.

"That's the house," remarked Edgar, pointing his taper fingers toward the small low windows of the parlor, which were open, and whose snow-white curtains were drawn aside to admit the cool evening air. Without appearing to notice the figure standing near them, he continued:

"I wish you would peep into that stifling enclosure. You would never sing again to your adorer Mr. Fenn that detestable song, 'Love in a Cottage.' The romance would disappear before such a reality."

Lura did not fly away, as her heart's first promptings appeared to suggest, but her lips became compressed and her eyes suddenly flashed with the indignation which these words aroused. A low, derisive laugh came back to her, as the two passed on; and turning, with increased anger she re-entered the little parlor.

"Brother! sister!" she said, between her clenched teeth. "Yes, I solemnly swear it in the presence of that agonized Redeemer who looks so compassionately down upon me; there shall be a day, if life and intellect are spared me, when their disdain shall be turned into obsequiousness; and may some greater power than I now possess be given me to restrain my resentment from returning to them the scorn they so richly deserve!"

The gate was hurriedly opened and closed. Thrusting back into its secret cell the evil spirit of hatred which had risen up unbidden, she hurried to the door and greeted Flora, whom she had been impatiently awaiting, with a pleasant smile.

"You naughty girl! You have spoiled my biscuits and my temper by your prolonged stay."

"Is it so late? I ought certainly to be very sorry, but I could not leave 'Beethoven' a moment sooner. Your delicious suppers cannot be compared with his exquisite

melody. I wish the autumn term would come, so that I could sing and play for you."

"Vain girl!" replied Lura, throwing her arms affectionately about her; "you think to fill me with envy. Ha, ha! But you have done that scores of times already, without any musical accompaniment."

"Really, you have grown wild to-day on that 'Discarded Daughter.' I must take you to dear Mrs. Clark for a reprimand. How is she to-night?"

"Very feeble; I fear we shall be motherless again before many months."

And the two girls entered the little dining-room, where the table was neatly spread for tea.

"I wish Anna was here," said the kind old lady, as she was drawn to the table; "I like to see her quiet face between yours, my children."

"I presume she will not be home until late," said Flora, "for Mrs. Lane always keeps her a while after tea to talk with her."

The meal, as was universally the case, passed off pleasantly and cheerfully. Mrs. Clark, although aged and feeble, did not dampen their joyousness by complaining words or desponding looks. Calm and resigned she had ever been since the hour when she was informed that her tottering steps were tending slowly but surely to the silent chamber of rest, and a happy smile often played upon her wasted features when speaking of the kindness her Heavenly Father had thrown about her in sending such comforters to cheer the last days of her lonely pilgrimage.

"Now for a walk," said Lura, as she refolded her checked apron, after the last polished dish had been restored to its place in the corner cupboard; "I haven't had sufficient exercise to-day to keep my digestive organs in a healthful state of activity. Will you, Miss Flora, be my companion in the promenade?"

Flora consented, and they left the house with joy and

laughter upon their lips, concealing the rankling grief from every beholder which nevertheless preyed upon each heart.

"There's Uncle Billy," exclaimed Flora, with delight, clapping her hands, as she saw the fat, jolly waterman approaching them from the principal street, which ran along by the river.

"True," said Lura, "and I really feel the mirthful influence of his merry eyes even this far off. Don't you?" and Lura laughed heartily, as he reached them and clasped a little hand in each of his broad palms.

"Ha, ha, my little shipmates! Come down on purpose to meet me? and I'll pay you for it sure as the *Lady Ann* is queen of all craft."

"We'll not dispute you with such a glowing promise to prevent," laughed Flora, "for pay, Uncle Billy, is no idle threat, as my memory can well testify."

"Want something good, eh? Well, if you can't wait till nine o'clock, *Lady Ann* will give it to you by calling upon her."

"What is it? Where is it?" both asked, eagerly.

"A basket sits on my chest in the cabin;" and with a chorus of merry laughter, they departed, Uncle Billy attending to the transaction of some business, and the girls hastening to the anticipated feast of "something good," which their kind friend never failed to bring on his return from New York.

It was almost dark down by the dingy old warehouses on the wharf, when they reached it, and both for a moment shrank back and would have returned but for a dark form that was standing just behind them.

"Let us hurry on," whispered Flora; "he will be gone when we return;" and hastening forward, they stood in a few moments on the deck of the *Lady Ann*. The cabin was soon reached, and a basket of bananas rewarded their search. Neither spoke, as they emerged from the thick darkness

below, for the shadows were deepening everywhere, and the delicacy of their situation burst fully upon them.

"This is too bad," said Lura; "I didn't think night was so near us, or I shouldn't have ventured in here. There's that same dark figure standing near that pile of lumber;" and they drew close to each other and hurried past.

"He passed us while we were talking to Uncle Billy; I know him by his massive fob-chain," said Flora, looking timidly behind her.

"Hush! he is following us. Let us run."

"No, no," said Flora, assuming a courage which she did not possess; "if he is the one you speak of that passed us, he means no harm. There is no evil in his large, dark eye. He sees the exposure into which our imprudence has led us, and no doubt has determined to protect us. I feel quite secure while he continues near us."

"You are a strange girl; you believe every one is good until his treachery has pierced your heart."

"I am glad that I do; it would be a sad fate to be doomed to hunt out improprieties in every one who crosses our path. But look! He still follows us, although we are out of danger here in the public street in the full glare of gaslight."

Both were silent, as they hurried with rapid steps toward their home. Perhaps both were thinking of the dark-eyed stranger of whom they had been talking, and the echo of whose steps Flora listened to catch, as they turned the corner of each street before reaching their destination. Her eyes had met his, as he passed them, and there was something in that look which seemed to hold communion with her heart. There was sorrow there, and the spirit of sadness within her arose in answering sympathy. There were lines upon his handsome face that had not been wrought by the finger of Time, and silver threads in his jetty locks which years had not interwoven. Of this she was quite confident.

The little gate was at last reached; and as Lura entered, she turned to look for the dark, mysterious stranger who had followed them.

"Ah! you needn't dodge into the shadow of that awning," she murmured, as she espied him. "We are safe now, and it will be a long time before we shall need you again as an escort on such a perilous route."

"I hope Anna returned long ago," said Flora, without seeming to notice her companion's remark. "Our stay has been prolonged to an unpardonable length."

A few days after these events a messenger was sent from Mrs. Willard to the school-room, requesting an interview with Flora. With much apprehension and a nervous fluttering of the heart, she arose to obey the summons.

"What can be the cause of this unusual request?" she asked herself, as she descended to the parlor. Thoughts of other days came rushing into her mind. Had Mrs. Willard heard from Edgerton? Perhaps he was coming, or it might be he had written to inquire if she were still there. The idea had often occurred to her that possibly her letter had never reached him, or that it had been lost in the course of his journey, and for the first time for many months there arose a longing desire to hear from him. "No, no," she thought, as she lingered at the parlor door for a moment, that she might collect herself; "he has discarded me, and why should I bestow a wish upon him?"

A step along the hall aroused her; and tapping lightly upon the door, she was admitted by the kind, matronly lady herself. She felt the pressure of the soft hand which clasped her own, but it did not still the anxious throbbings of her heart or remove the burning glow from her cheeks. The mild, gentle voice of Mrs. Willard drove back at length the hot tears which were fast gushing up from her agitated heart; and when she said, "A friend of yours called upon me this morning to inquire into the progress of your studies, and I find, upon investigation, that you excel in nearly all

you have undertaken," her anxiety vanished, and a pleasurable emotion filled her heart.

"Will you tell me who called?" she timidly asked.

"I did not ask his name, as I supposed him to be a near relative or one whom you would readily know if I mentioned the fact of his having been here."

"I have no gentleman friend that can possibly feel a sufficient interest in me to induce him to make inquiries as to my progress; or if I have, I am not aware of the fact," said Flora, with much agitation.

"Very strange!" said Mrs. Willard. "Had he been your father, he could not have manifested more interest. He wished that I should urge you to come to the seminary to board, and that I would exercise a guardianship over you so far as to provide for your wants, and gave me a check of two hundred dollars for the purpose, saying that my purse should be replenished as often as need required. Can you think of no one from whom you might expect such generosity?"

"No one, I can assure you, unless it be—"

"Mr. Edgerton, I suppose you mean?" said the lady, coming to her aid.

Flora nodded assent.

"It was not he—quite his opposite in personal appearance, having very black hair and eyes."

"Does he wear a massive fob-chain?" inquired Flora, starting to her feet.

"I think he does. You have seen him, then?"

"I have met a gentleman corresponding to your description, but only in the street. I do not know him, and cannot accept his proffered generosity. No, no; he is nothing to me. I have avowed my purpose of making my way independently through this trying ordeal, or at least of contracting no debt which I shall not be permitted to discharge."

Tears rushed to her eyes; and bowing her head, she wept freely.

"I know not how to advise you," said Mrs. Willard, laying her hand gently upon her curls. "Had I suspected that this gentleman was a stranger to you, I should have acted very differently. I will think more of this, my child; and if you wish, at some future time I will give you my views upon the subject. In the mean time, take this check, which upon examination I find bears the name of Dupont. I have no means of returning it, as he did not give me his address."

Flora took the folded paper, and was about to leave the room, when Mrs. Willard abruptly asked,

"How long have you been in the school?"

"Nearly two years."

"Yes, I was thinking the second year ended with this term. Before you finished your first your proposition was made to become a teacher pupil, but at its close money was forwarded by Mr. Edgerton which covered the whole expense. Last week I received a letter from him inquiring if you were still here, and requesting me to forward your school-bill, which was done."

Flora sank upon a chair near her, but did not speak.

"I should have consulted you, but I had entirely forgotten your proposition. I see no reason, however, as you came here with the understanding that you were to accept his generosity, why you should not receive it. If there be any good reason, will you not confide in me?"

"There is none, perhaps," answered Flora, hesitatingly, "unless it be the spirit of independence which has taken possession of me."

"It is a commendable spirit, my child, if it does not trample upon our own peace and the happiness of others. You are peculiarly situated; few orphans like yourself have friendship and kindness to throw away. Consult your own heart and the unfailing law of right, and hesitate not to walk where virtue and duty shall point the way."

Flora thanked her and left the room.

It was a tedious walk home that hot, sultry afternoon; and when Mr. Fenn met her, and invited her to take a seat in his carriage and accompany him in a drive into the country, she did not hesitate.

There was something strange in Flora's demeanor. When we are defeated in our pet plans or disappointed in the accomplishment of some great achievement which we have proposed to ourselves, we are sad and dispirited. Flora, however, was not. There were, indeed, traces of tears upon her cheeks, but happiness was beaming through them. There was a depression in her heart, but joy came dancing in and out, collecting sweet memories from the past with which to bury it.

"What a pleasant ride we have had!" said Mr. Fenn, as they drove back. "I wish you were always happy, and that I could always remain in your presence, for your joy imparts to me the keenest zest of life."

Flora looked at him in surprise, but his hand was outstretched to assist her in alighting, and his face wore its usual expression of brotherly kindness; that was all. A cheerful "good-night," a wave of the hand, and the carriage drove away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A BURDEN REMOVED.

A LOUD knocking at the street door startled the inmates of the little kitchen where Lura and Anna, who was now one with them, were busily engaged in preparing breakfast, and caused Flora to suspend her dusting and arranging above-stairs that she might discover what the unusual noise could mean.

“Who on airth can that be?” asked Mrs. Clark, raising her head, which had for many minutes been resting upon her hand.

“No sheriff, I hope,” replied Lura, setting the well-filled coffee-pot upon the table, “but I’ll soon ascertain;” and throwing aside her apron, she hastened to obey the peremptory summons.

She was met at the door by a teamster with a broad, red face, with his blue frock, the badge of his calling, hanging loosely over his shoulders, and his long boots, which had the unfailing propensity of daily swallowing the tattered extremities of his outer garments. After emptying his capacious mouth of a large quantity of filthy, dark-colored liquid, he said, gruffly,

“A box for 220.”

Lura’s quick eye had discovered the long box upon the walk outside of the gate, and also that there were more men standing beside it. One of them, better dressed than his comrades, approached, as she appeared; and before time was given her to express the opinion that they were laboring under some mistake, he had reached the door.

"Here's a letter for Miss Flora Hawes," he said, as he handed it to Lura.

Flora, hearing the words, hurried down stairs, broke the seal and read:

"FLORA: Do not scruple to accept the box which accompanies this. The bearer has received orders to set the instrument up and leave it in prime order. There is a fate before you; hesitate not to use every means in your power to prepare yourself for it. Before long you shall know more; until then it is decreed that we remain strangers."

Flora, full of wonder and amazement, had seated herself upon the step on which she had been standing, quite forgetful that other eyes than Lura's were fastened upon her.

"Shall we bring it in through the door?" inquired the officious bearer of the letter, looking curiously about.

"Yes," answered Flora, aroused by his words; "it's a small place in which to stow so large a piece of furniture, but we'll try."

Lura returned to the kitchen with Flora, where a council was held over the mysterious note, and many were the comments which were made upon the inexplicable present.

"Edgarton has sent it," said Lura, emphatically; "how can you doubt it?"

Flora shook her head negatively.

"This letter was written in New York, while he is in England. Besides, how should he, or any one else, presume to know anything of my future or the fates which are to govern me?"

"Young gentlemen like Sir Charles Edgarton often dare to tamper with prophecy in the case of a beautiful young lady's future," replied Lura, laughing.

Flora blushed very deeply, and would have felt a little angry, perhaps, if the words had been spoken by any one else.

"Do tell me, Anna," said Mrs. Clark, who had hitherto been forgotten in the excitement, "what is going on; what are they bringing into the house?"

"A piano, and Flora cannot conceive who has sent it."

"What! A grand piano in my poor old house? Well, if that don't beat all! What will be the next great blessing I shall receive before I die?" and the dear old creature settled down in her chair with a look of unalloyed satisfaction beaming from every wrinkle in her aged face.

It required the expenditure of many impatient words and gestures, repeated trials of "this way" and "that way," before the elegant piano could become an honored occupant of the little, old-fashioned parlor, of which it threatened at first to claim a full monopoly. But when at last the door closed upon the bustling man in black who had been commissioned to leave the instrument "in prime order," it did not refuse to send forth its sweetest tones at Flora's touch and to startle with its exquisite melody the slumbering echoes in the old garret into a new life.

"Flora, sing that strange, wild song of the past that came bubbling up through your heart, and sank into mine with its exhilarating power, stirring up every latent energy and rending in twain the thick veil of doubt and uncertainty that shut in my soul from every future hope and prospect that afternoon when we sat alone two years ago in the quiet woods upon Mount Ida?" Lura asked, throwing her arms about Flora's neck.

"I do all that?" asked Flora, looking into the glowing face beside her.

"Yes, all that, and more than that. Now for the song."

Flora Hawes, according to the teacher's report, had excelled particularly in two branches, music and painting. To her skill in the former many could testify who would stop before the small, weatherbeaten house that had previously escaped their notice, and listen to the sweet strains

which seemed to issue from beneath every time-stained weatherboard that shut the accomplished performer from their longing gaze.

The wonder occasioned by the strange letter and the elegant present wore away after some weeks had passed, and nothing more was heard from the writer, yet Flora could not deny that a light had shot athwart her future which all her philosophical reasonings failed to darken.

"It could not have been Edgarton," she would often repeat to herself, "but there was a resemblance in the handwriting. However, it was not he—it could not be."

Yet how very kind he was, not to forget her, as she believed he had done! Still, how passing strange it was that he had not written, as he had so often promised to do! She would not think of him; she would wait patiently for time to unravel the mystery thrown about her destiny.

Even Mr. Fenn could not assist her, who came now very often to hear her sing and have a chat with the young ladies; and so all conversation upon the affair had died away, and the three pursued the quiet tenor of their ways as though no unexpected interruption had rippled the swift current of the stream of Time. Thus the waves roll on, each swallowing its predecessor or covering it with forgetfulness.

Flora had procured from some of her slight acquaintances a few pupils, to whom she gave music lessons on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, in which she had met with great success. She was, however, astonished to find a richly-dressed young lady awaiting her return from school one evening, who wished to enroll herself upon the list of her pupils.

"You must certainly excuse me," replied Flora, blushing deeply. "I have attempted nothing more than to teach the rudiments of a science in which I am as yet but a learner."

"I do not care for the 'do, re, mi,' and flats and sharps, as

I know enough of those now ; I only want to learn to sing as you do," replied the young lady, "and you must teach me. Perhaps you do not remember me," she continued, seeing that Flora hesitated, "but I have not forgotten the young girl who applied to my elegant mamma for a menial situation, and was not only refused, but insulted."

Flora started, and her face and neck became suffused with a crimson hue, as the hateful retrospect arose before her.

"It was my sister that joined with her, not I. If you knew how I scolded them, you would not be angry with me, but would give me lessons, that I may have an opportunity of repairing the injury which their selfishness inflicted, and for which they have been doubly paid;" and she laughed a low rippling laugh to which it would have been refreshing to listen had it not issued from lips mantled with irony and scorn.

"Oh, say yes," she continued, laying her gloved hand upon Flora's. "We shall love each other, and be very happy together, I know!"

Flora could not resist her pleading looks and words ; and it was arranged that, as her afternoons were occupied, the new pupil should come two mornings each week to receive the desired instruction.

At this accession to her labors Mr. Fenn was decidedly indignant :

"Your morning walks to be given up, every half-holiday of pleasure relinquished, and for no other reason than that she was determined that it should be so."

"How can I avoid it?" asked Flora. "Would you have me place myself in the power of a stranger by accepting donations from his hidden hand? No ; my hours of nightly rest shall be surrendered before such a calamity shall befall me."

She had risen to her feet while speaking, her graceful form dilating, her dark eyes flashing with excitement, and

her cheeks glowing with the indignation which her own thoughts aroused.

"Flora, you misunderstand me, but I forgive you," he replied, looking calmly at her; "you have no reason to suspect me of the cruelty you have insinuated. I would have you free as the summer bird until all my arts of fascination are exhausted; then, if you will not sing in my bower, I will bless you for these blissful days, which memory will ever carry along with me, fresh and peaceful, because you made them so."

She grew calm, as she looked at his passionless face and listened to his quiet words, so full of tenderness and love. They were alone; but before Flora could find words to reply, Lura entered.

A glance from her keen, penetrating eye told her that words of love had been spoken—of that love which she had long suspected. The smouldering blaze flashed for a moment from her keen orbs, and from that hour the slumbering demon in her heart was awakened, and a long time elapsed before it could be composed.

Flora soon missed the good-night kiss and the fond sisterly embrace of her hitherto dearest friend, and her heart grew sick.

"What have I done?" she would ask herself over and over again, as she lay restlessly upon her pillow, "that she should withdraw her love from me?" But the more she wrestled with her secret grief, deeper and deeper rankled the piercing barb in her sensitive heart.

Again the autumn leaves began to rustle upon the ground and the cheerful flowers to droop their heads and wither.

"So depart my joys," sighed Flora, as she sat by the window, looking out for Anna, whose presence had become doubly dear to her of late, for in her mild face she ever found an answering look of sympathy and affection.

The twilight was deepening, but she caught the first

glimpse of her friend, as she entered the street two squares off.

"How rapidly she walks!" thought Flora, as she watched her progress; "there must be some strong joy in her heart. Would that she could impart some of it to me! Ah! why should I become so dispirited at each new sorrow? It is not that my heart is so susceptible of grief, but because each new pang increases the ponderous load which no counter-acting pleasure has as yet had the power to remove."

Thus soliloquizing, she had forgotten her friend, and was not aware of her approach until she had reached the gate.

"Flora, good news," she exclaimed, holding up a letter.

"I wish you joy," said Flora, faintly smiling.

"Not for me, but for you, dear Flora;" and she placed the letter in her hand.

"From Mrs. Lane. Oh, if it were only—" But the words died upon her lips and the shadow disappeared from her face, as she read:

"DARLING FLORA: How can I ask you to forgive, when I have grieved you so much? But I was not willful in my suspicions. Gladly would I have believed you innocent, as my poor child believed you. Oh, Flora, my heart is broken; come to me, speak one word of pardon, and it will be a balm to the cankering wound that is eating away my life. Anna will tell you all; my heart and eyes fail me. Once more come to your afflicted friend,

"C. C. LANE."

"Anna, what does this mean? Speak quickly! Does she know me to be innocent?" Flora asked, in great agitation.

"Yes; the brooch is found. A trunk was unpacked yesterday which had not been opened since some time

before Kitty's death, and it was found attached to the fringe of her crape shawl," replied Anna, hurriedly.

Flora did not speak, but her head dropped upon the window-sill at which she had been sitting, and she wept. Lost to all sensation but the one great thankfulness which filled her heart, she did not hear a footstep until a hand was laid gently upon her head.

It was Mr. Fenn who had approached her, and his hand had soothingly caressed her.

"Always near when the heart calls you," she said, faintly.

"I would be if my listening spirit could always hear the summons. But what grieves you?"

"Nothing. I weep because I am so happy. The dead body of suspected guilt has been removed, and Mrs. Lane asks for pardon for the dreadful accusation."

"You will grant it?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Of course; she shall have it freely, and never know the agony which I have suffered for nearly a year."

"Noble girl! You are right, I suppose. Does Miss Goodale come for her lesson to-morrow morning?" he asked, when about turning away.

"No; she was here this morning."

"Then I will call in my carriage at an early hour, and give you a short ride."

Before she could thank him he was in the street.

"I must go and tell Lura," she soliloquized, as his steps died away in the distance. "She certainly will rejoice with me;" and full of bright anticipations she proceeded to the room where she knew Lura was sitting.

"May I come in?" she asked, tapping lightly upon the door.

"I thought I heard Mr. Fenn's voice below; how is it you are here?" was her only reply as Flora entered.

"He only stopped a moment, and I have some good

news I want to tell you;" and she threw her arms lovingly about Lura's neck.

"You need not tell me," said Lura, passionately, throwing her arms aside. "I know it all now. You have promised at last to condescend to become the wife of Lewis Fenn. Amazing benignity! Unhappy fate!" cried the embittered girl, with great sarcasm.

Flora was astonished. The whole truth flashed upon her, and she wondered that she had been so blind.

"Yes, she loves him;" and without speaking, Flora retired to her own room, locking the door after her.

"She hates me now," cried Lura, as she heard the key turn in the lock—"yes, she hates me because of my injustice, and despises me for my unsought love. Fool that I am for throwing away the only true love that was ever bestowed upon me! Fool—yes, fool that I am! Yet it is done. She knows my secret, and turns from me as from an unworthy object." While she spoke the fire that was in her eye died away, and she fell upon her knees.

Severe was the struggle with the fiend in her heart, and the moon had long looked in upon her bowed figure before she became sufficiently composed to retire to her bed. Anna, whose turn it was to sleep by the bed of the aged invalid, knew nothing of the two sad hearts above her that throbbed and throbbed all night beneath their heavy burden of grief. But when morning dawned, and Lura, earlier than her wont, descended to the breakfast-room, there were traces of agitation still lingering upon her face, and Flora, too, though endeavoring to smile, did not wear her usual cheerfulness.

At the table Anna rehearsed more in detail the incidents connected with the finding of the long-lost brooch, and asked of Flora if she should carry word of her intended call. Lura looked at Flora for a moment, then burst into tears and left the table.

"What can be the matter with our unhappy Lura?"

asked Mrs. Clark, in great surprise; "I never saw her shedding tears before. Poor child! I have noticed for some time that she was not as cheerful as usual. I hope she has no new trouble;" and the poor old lady sank lower into her cushioned chair and wiped the perspiration from her wrinkled brow.

A carriage stopping at the gate ended the conversation, and Flora was soon whirling away at a rapid speed over the streets and along the noble Hudson, far from the noise and tumult of the busy city, where the birds greeted them with pleasant minstrelsy, and somewhat of the fragrance of summer still lingered in the fields and filled the cool air with sweets. It was a lovely drive, and Flora felt cheered and refreshed, as they drew near the seminary, where she was to alight.

"Do you know," asked Mr. Fenn, "that the Edwards are to spend the winter in England?"

"Certainly not; neither has Lura been apprised of it."

"I suspected as much. Lena informed me last evening. They are to sail at an early day from New York, and it is quite uncertain when they return."

"I am very sorry for Lura," said Flora, almost tearfully; "she has often expressed a desire to visit her native land, and now the family would leave her without one parting regret that she is not to accompany them."

It was even a severer trial to the unhappy girl than Flora had anticipated. For weeks she grieved, refusing to be comforted, and allowing no one to approach her upon the subject, except Mrs. Clark.

"I know very well that it is no more than I should have expected," she said, one day, as they were conversing upon the subject; "and since, as they would tell me, I sundered with my own hands the silken cords of family affection, I shall not be so foolish as to weep because I am left standing outside of the protecting fold. But, my dear friend, it is not because they are to enjoy a long-looked-for

and coveted pleasure which is to be denied me that I mourn. Oh no! The cold hand of destiny early chilled the gushing spring of my existence, and spread out my life before me a barren plain, and bade me traverse it. Once I imagined that my feet had escaped the dread waste, and that a path henceforth stretched pleasantly through my future upon which those sunbeams that gladden the life of others would shimmer cheerfully. But to find myself driven back by uncontrollable circumstances among the icebergs where years ago a terrible shipwreck had wellnigh befallen me—this has driven me to despair, hopeless, interminable despair!”

“Child, child, what are you saying? Don’t rave about destiny and despair. You know nothing of either. Life has not been all sunshine with you, nor all darkness. Look at me. See my form sinking, sinking. In a few more days these withered hands, brown with toil, will be cold and stiff; these eyes that have beheld much and have often wept bitter tears of disappointment and grief will be closed; yet from the very verge of life on which I now stand my soul rejoices in the God who created it, knowing, as I do, that ‘he doeth all things well.’ There was a purpose in your early sorrows. The gold does not appear until it first be burned, nor even then unless the dross be taken away by the fire. Lura, I have known you from a little child, and I have watched the spirit of hatred and revenge looking out from your eyes; it is not yet conquered. No, no; it is not conquered;” and tears rolled down the furrowed cheeks and fell upon the bowed head of the listener.

Both remained silent for some time, when Lura arose, kissed the pale, wet cheek, as she whispered,

“Will you help me wage the war of extermination? Pray for me, for God refuses to hear my prayer.”

“Not so, not so, my child. His ear is ever open, and his hand ever ready to help. Believe it, Lura, and pray.”

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PARDONED HERBERT.

WHO can solve the problem of life or deny the power that fills up the checkered woof of our probationary existence?

Anna Graves was walking leisurely homeward from her daily toil, the seared autumnal leaves falling thickly about her, as she strolled carelessly on beneath the huge old button-wood trees that skirted the street upon either side, lost in her own meditations, when footsteps approached her, and a shadow fell upon the pavement on which her eyes were resting. Looking up, she saw a tall figure standing before her. For one moment the gaze of the two met, and "Nettie!" with its old sound greeted her ear.

"Herbert! my long-lost Herbert, yet lives!" This was breathed by lips pale and bloodless; and had not a strong arm been placed around her, she would have fallen.

"Nettie, Nettie! my precious one! Remember where we are, and compose yourself."

Her ear was not deaf to the entreaty; and summoning all her faltering resolution, she drove back the palsy tremor which joy at his sudden appearance had occasioned, and in a moment stood before him, calm and quiet, the young seamstress of an hour before.

"This is a joy," said Herbert, as she took his arm and they walked slowly on together, "that for years I have feared to anticipate. But where will you lead me?" he exclaimed. "I have much to tell, and you much to hear. Perhaps, after all, this blissful cup has been placed to my lips only that it may be dashed to the ground before I can taste its sweets. Oh, Nettie, this is a strange life! Eight

years have changed us both, and it may be your heart repeats not the words of our parting."

She did not speak, but her eyes revealed the truth of unchanging love.

"But tell me," she asked, after they had walked on a few moments in silence; "how is it that we have met here in a city so far away from our early home?"

"Mere chance led me to you, or perhaps you will say a Father's hand guided my footsteps. I have almost been led to believe this myself since witnessing the mysterious way through which I have been led so often since I saw you last."

"Would that you had quite learned to believe in a Father's care!" she said, meekly.

He continued:

"I entered our native village some months ago, but could learn nothing of you. Business detained me, as I found the property which had belonged to my mother left for me, should I ever return. After attending to that, I had determined to find you, should I be obliged to search the world over. Five weeks since, while looking over some old papers in the office of our mutual friend Charles B——, I found one containing a thrilling account of the landslide in this city, and one name upon the melancholy list which was appended attracted my attention. The rest, darling, you can imagine. Once more we have met; whether we are to be again sundered depends entirely upon your decision."

Flora was sitting by the piano singing or chanting a wild, fitful song, learned in early childhood, while her slender fingers were playing an improvised accompaniment, filling up the strange melody from her lips, as the happy couple reached the gate.

The young man stopped, and with wonder and astonishment depicted upon his face, inquired,

"Nettie, who is that sweet singer?"

"They call me 'Anna' here," remarked his companion, with a smile.

"Anna?"

"Yes; we ladies are accused of a fondness for change, and I thought to satisfy this whim of my nature, and at the same time to carry out my purpose of seclusion better, by adopting the first part of my lawful name, instead of the latter, which had become too sacred to me to be used by unfamiliar lips. But you inquired about the fair singer who is quite unconsciously charming you, I perceive. Enter, and I will introduce you to her; she is as beautiful and good, as her music is enchanting."

Flora arose, as she heard footsteps in the passage, and came to the door with a smile of welcome upon her lips; but seeing the stranger, she started back, and with a faint cry of surprise sank upon a chair, pale and agitated. There was no mistaking the cast of that face. The large hazel eyes which looked so wonderingly into hers could be none other than those which, three years before, had beamed down upon her with a soul full of silent joy and thankfulness. Yes, Edward Herbert, the friend of Edgerton, for the preservation of whose life she had plighted her maiden vow, now stood before her, and his presence brought back such a flood of memories that her brain grew wild; and stretching forth her hands to Anna, she gasped for help.

"Flora," exclaimed the young man, rushing forward and clasping the outstretched hand firmly in his own—"Flora, my preserver, shrink not from me. There is no blood upon my hand, and to you—to you alone—I owe my life and my present joy. Compose yourself," he continued, seeing that she still trembled violently. "Edgerton told you of a blue-eyed maiden whose pale face had grown paler with anxious fears and tearful watchings for one who would never return to her. Behold, Flora, the beautiful blue-eyed maiden for whose happiness you saved the life of her betrothed. If you would make your work complete, help me to reveal that

tragic story of the past, in such a manner that the love which will make the life you saved enduring, may not shrink in horror from me."

There was a long conversation in the little parlor that night. Revelations were made that caused the cheek to pale and tears follow in quick succession over the rehearsal of wrongs and mental tortures, and quickened the pulsations of the heart, and sent the hot blood rushing to cheek and brow with a crimson sympathetic glow, while here and there a sunbeam played upon the sombre picture, and sent its rays out into the future with a soul-cheering light, until another cloud came rolling up and shut it out from sight.

But when the morning came, and Flora re-entered the parlor which she had left the previous evening in possession of the seamstress and her restored lover, there was a new light of subdued joy beaming from the faces of her friends that the long night had failed to dim.

Four weeks afterward Herbert Travers—or Ned Herbert of the United States army—led to the hymeneal altar the still lovely Annetta Graves, whose early love had outlived years of separation, and came forth from the blight of surrounding circumstances as fresh and vigorous as when plighted with maiden modesty beneath the vine-covered roof of her childhood's happy home.

The frost-covered branches of the prim old lilac bush were still glistening in the early sunlight, when Mr. Fenn and the kind old pastor who had long been Anna's friend and the friend of her mother entered the little parlor where Lura alone was sitting to receive them. A few moments afterward Flora entered with traces of tears upon her cheeks, but with a smile upon her lips, as she clasped alternately the hands extended to her. Then footsteps, as of two walking side by side, were heard along the passage, and the happy pair whose future was this hour to be united stood before the gray-haired man of God, who reverently united

their hands and linked their lives with an inseparable bond; then with uplifted hands invoked a blessing to rest upon the new life that hour commenced.

The marriage of the pale young seamstress was in keeping with her unassuming life, but who could doubt, looking upon her radiant face, that it was also as true and pure?

One hour after, the happy pair stood upon the broad white deck of the *Vanderbilt* as she snorted and puffed in her restless eagerness to be once more free from the sloops and barges that surrounded her, and proudly bore her treasures off down the majestic Hudson. Farewells were sent to them from the company that lingered and gazed at them on the wharf; and as long as Anna could perceive Flora's handkerchief waving in the morning breeze, tears dimmed her sight.

"You and I," she whispered, turning to Herbert, as the last familiar sight was swallowed in the distance—"it's only you and I."

"No other is needed to make me happy," was his contented reply; and the response which came up from her inmost soul brought the joy of his heart out upon his expressive countenance. "Back in the vine-covered cottage where we have spent so many joyous days we will take up the severed link that joins us with the past, and live as though no dark, spectral years had come in between, with their separations, their bereavements and their sorrows. See the smooth waters before us. Nothing disturbs the bosom of this lovely river. We plough through it, and the track closes up as calmly as though no furrows had been made on its bosom."

Flora, accompanied by Mr. Fenn, returned to her home that lovely autumnal morning more sad and dispirited than she had been for many weeks. Lura had been detained by the fast-declining health of her aged friend, and Miss Goodale was alone to meet her.

"So that wedding is over, and I am very glad of it,"

was her first salutation. "Now I want to have you bestow upon me the affection which you threw away upon her. I can be as good and true a friend as she could possibly be, and there is no reason why you shouldn't love me."

Flora smiled, in spite of her present sorrow, as she looked upon the simple, artless face before her.

"You seem to assume as a positive fact that I do not love you," she said, quickly, opening at the same time the piano, preparatory to her morning task.

"You can close that again," said the young lady, waving her delicately gloved hand toward the instrument; "I do not feel like singing. Besides, I want to prove to you that you do not love me, or else I want the satisfaction of knowing that you do."

"Very well," answered Flora, doing as she was bidden. "Now for the test."

"If one person loves another, such person will do anything in her power to please that other, will she not?"

"If her wishes be not unreasonable," answered Flora.

"Mine are never unreasonable," rejoined Mattie, laughing heartily; "so that, if your affection is not spurious, you will grant the request I have to make."

"Perhaps so."

"There is no 'perhaps' in the bargain; you must!"

"Rather imperative," said Flora, growing more cheerful in spite of herself. "But I am becoming very impatient to know to what ordeal I am to be subjected."

"Listen, then. Next Tuesday is my eighteenth birthday, and the evening is to be honored by a party. A large one, sumptuous and brilliant, was intended, but my sister, being away and concluding not to return in time for the fête, has caused it to crumble down to a merely social gathering."

Flora started, but the volatile girl continued:

"Now, the proof of your affection is to be your consent or refusal to be one of my guests on that eventful evening. My mamma will never know you, for she can't see three

inches beyond her dignified Grecian nose, and has no idea whether the girl who paid her that untimely visit which deprived my sister of her *beau ideal* lover is really black or white. You hesitate? I shall send our carriage for you precisely at nine o'clock."

"Think, Mattie, for my sake. Is there no other way in which you can try my affection?" said Flora, hurriedly. "You know that your request, to say the least, is very impracticable for many reasons."

"Please stop," said Mattie, imploringly; "impracticabilities and reasonings always irritate me. You can come if you will, and I can convince you that I am right. That pretty blue silk which Anna was remodeling into such perfect style the other day will do nicely. I thought of it at the time, and did want to suggest low neck and short sleeves. But then your style of beauty looks queenly in a close fitting bodice, and no ornament is needed to enliven your charms. Besides, you are such a superb singer! It is a pity to waste so much sweetness on this unappreciative furniture, when so many might be charmed by it."

"Forgive me, but really I must interrupt your plausible arguments. It is time I was on my way to school," said Flora, rising, and walking across the room to the table on which her books were lying.

"Flora, how graceful you are! You must have taken dancing lessons when very young. So did I, but mamma says I am as awkward as Phillis, and she never gets into a chair without first upsetting it or seating herself upon the floor."

Flora laughed heartily, as she thought of her early quadrilles and cotillions, taught by the skipping fawn which she had determined to capture, as they both bounded, in eager chase, over rocks and fallen trees in her native woods, or practiced while climbing the bold cliff to search for the first spring flower that had dared to peep out at the sun.

But she remarked quietly, as she donned her bonnet and shawl,

“I will think of what you have been urging. Meanwhile, do not judge me too harshly. Your heart must tell you that one so lonely as I must prize an affection so freely offered as yours has been. If it does not, it is because you have never known the desolation of an orphan’s life. I do love you;” and she stooped and kissed the inviting face turned toward her. “Your lively humor refreshes me. This morning a gloomy cloud seemed to envelop me, but you have perforated its dark folds and let in a struggling ray of sunshine. All day it will cheer me, making my burden lighter and speeding on the lagging hours. Do you not think I love you for this?”

The chirping girl returned her warm kiss, and with her accustomed volatility said, laughing, as they left the house together,

“I shall send my carriage precisely at nine, with strict orders not to return without you; so make yourself pretty if you do not wish to appear in that faded calico.”

“Faded calico!” thought Flora, looking down at her dress, as she walked on. “Yes, it is faded, and this is not the first time my attention has been called to the fact, and with more cruel intentions than actuated my thoughtless friend just now;” and the crimson glow burned upon her cheek. “But I will not care. There is One, at least, who will not judge us by our apparel; at his feet let me sit and learn patience and forbearance amid all my perplexities!”

Flora had been twice to Mrs. Lane’s since the missing brooch was found, and to-night she must repeat her visit. There was a dread associated with this duty, for the light that once cheered and illuminated that elegant home had gone out, and desolation and death were written everywhere. The spacious rooms were cold and cheerless to her; echoes of gleeful laughter and merry voices slumbered on even in the long halls, awakened not by the muffled step

which moved slowly and mechanically through them, yet dismal forms passed each other upon the stairway and looked into each other's faces with a sad, disconsolate expression, then vanished from sight, each to mourn, perchance, over the one great sorrow, never once striving to penetrate the cloud that had descended upon them.

A cold, dreary rain had set in, and was steadily falling when Flora presented herself at the door of Mrs. Lane's residence and was shown to that lady's dressing-room, where the thickly drawn curtains shut out Nature's feeble light and created almost a midnight gloom.

"I am so glad you have come," said Mrs. Lane, feebly, who was seated in a softly cushioned chair near the grate, where a flickering fire was burning. "Come and sit by me; I wish to talk with you."

Flora drew an ottoman near her, and prepared to listen.

"You are no worse?" she inquired, as she caught a glimpse of the pale face from the feeble light of the dying embers.

"Worse? Yes, yes, I am infinitely worse. O God! my fate could not be more bitter, more unendurable. Flora, I am blind. My physician tells me I am hopelessly blind, and I know it—yes, I know it;" and the poor woman burst into tears and wept convulsively.

"Dear friend, do not weep," said Flora, pityingly. "Please, do not weep; it will make you so much worse."

"There is no use in talking to me in that strain. I have heard those same words over and over and over again during the last six months, and what good have they accomplished? Not one of those who utter them knows my sorrow—not one can feel a mother's grief, which crushes me. Then, to be blind! Oh, Flora, to be blind is worse than death—far, far worse."

"Can I not comfort you?" said Flora, laying hold of her hand with a tender affection. "I have heard that there was much consolation to be found even in blindness—much to

make one resigned, and even cheerful, under so great an affliction."

"That is because they who say so have not tried it; I know better."

"I know it must be sad—ah! very, very sad—but it has been a great pleasure to me, when sorrowing, to feel that 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.'"

Mrs. Lane groaned, and remained silent. Much did Flora say to her, but the unhappy woman could not look beyond her one great sorrow, which with its vast immensity filled all her future.

Poor Flora! Hour after hour was passed by her in that room, so dark and dismal, vainly endeavoring to soothe the wretched mother, who only fretted and pined beneath her burden, and refused the aid of any hand which sought to relieve her of it. Though the task was a thankless one, Flora did not shrink from it.

"I am only doing my duty," was her invariable response, when friends anxious for her health sought to induce her to relinquish some of the tasks which she had imposed upon herself.

"But," said Mrs. Clark, upon one of these occasions, "there are duties connected with ourselves which God will not suffer us to disregard without our paying the penalty of our disobedience. Just think, my child, what an amount of work you are doing every week: four whole days and two half days each week in school, six music pupils to fill up the half holidays in which you should take recreation, two mornings filled up with lessons to another pupil, besides all the dusting and sweeping and scouring and scrubbing which is crowded into every other minute when you are not studying; and now you will increase all this heavy weight by taking upon yourself the office of comforter and counselor to one who clouds your joys and turns a deaf ear to your words of consolation."

Flora smiled, as she kissed her aged adviser, then, taking

her thin, wasted face between her own plump hands, said, lightly,

"Surely, my dear, kind friend, you have piled up quite a budget of work before me; I did not realize before that I was so enterprising. It really gives me new life. I think I must look for another pupil to fill up my vacant hours on Wednesday afternoons. A tear? Oh, my dear friend, you cannot think I deem your solicitude idle and worthless. No, no, you can only imagine how sweet it is to me. But I feel so much better, now that I can pay the most of my own expenses;" and she kissed again the anxious, upturned face, whispering, "Forgive me if my words seemed unappreciative or cold."

"No, no, it was not that. I know you too well to judge you harshly, my child, but I am grieved to think how soon you will be alone. Who will love you as I have done?"

"Do not speak thus. You will stay with us yet a long time, for you are better, much better, and the cool air will work wonders for you."

She did not seem to notice Flora's words, but continued:

"I am very sorry to perceive a coldness existing between my children. Flora, what does it mean? She will not tell me. It will sadden my last hour to know that you both stand beside me with a severed interest and your love crushed and broken."

Flora bowed her head and wept.

"A few months ago you were sisters in affliction, and my poor widowed heart rejoiced to see you together, so loving, so kind. Oh, Flora, forgive her if she has done aught to grieve. Let me see you happy together once more before I die."

Lura was sitting in the adjoining room, busy, as usual, with her pen, when the tremulous voice of the invalid reached her ear; and when the last words had escaped her thin white lips, and she saw the tears coursing down the

deep furrows of her cheek, she arose hurriedly and knelt by the side of the weeping Flora.

"The fault is entirely my own," she said, in a calm, sweet voice. "It was I who severed that hallowed bond so precious to me; my spirit of evil it is that has desecrated our fair Utopia, and brought desolation and bitter repentance into this restless, envious heart and deep, dark sorrows upon one as pure and loving as humanity can claim. It is all my own work, and upon me alone, my dear, dear friend, shall the bitter punishment of your sorrow fall."

Flora, without raising her head, placed her arm gently and affectionately around the kneeling figure beside her.

"My children, my children!" said the old lady, feebly, as she laid a hand upon each head. "May the God in whom I have trusted, and ever found an unfailing Friend in every time of need, guide and protect you, and with a loving hand drive away every cloud that may hover over you, and lead you in safety through a bright and peaceful future!"

Her voice failed her; and with streaming eyes and clasped hands, that were raised imploringly upward, her lips moved in silent prayer.

"She is praying for us," said Flora, quickly.

"God grant that her prayer may be answered!" replied Lura, throwing her arms affectionately around her friend and pressing her fondly.

"Are we sisters once again, dear Lura?"

"Sisters, henceforth and for ever. Oh, I have been very unkind; but did you know my heart—the dreadful demon that ever dwells there—you would forgive and pity me."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ALONE NO LONGER.

“THE vessel in which your family are to sail leaves New York for Liverpool this week, I understand,” said Mr. Fenn to Lura, one evening, as he was conversing with her and Flora in the little parlor.

Lura expressed surprise. She had not heard when they were to leave, and now the time was so near! Perhaps she should never see them again; and a feeble wail of agony arose in her heart.

“My mother, oh, my mother, is no thought of thine with me this night?”

A low, suppressed cough came to them through the open door, and Lura hastily left the room.

“Mrs. Clark grows more and more feeble every day,” said Flora, solemnly.

“Your home will again be broken up when she has gone; where will my little friend find another?” asked Mr. Fenn, with an assumed look of indifference upon his face.

“I have not thought much about it,” answered Flora; “God will provide another for me, as He has provided this.”

An incipient sneer for an instant disfigured his features, and he was silent.

“Flora, I wish my faith were as active as yours,” he at length remarked. “But it troubles me to think of leaving you with an uncertain future hanging over you.”

“Leave me?” she exclaimed, in surprise; “surely you do not propose leaving me? Oh, how sad, how lonely, I shall be!” And then, as if fearing that she had spoken too frankly,

she asked, with more quietness, driving back the tears which had somewhat dimmed her vision, "Why do you leave this beautiful city and the friends who will miss you so much? Are you not cruel?"

"Am I, Flora? Perhaps you are not aware that my visit has been prolonged now for more than a year, during which time I have been flitting like a silly butterfly around one of the most beautiful, but unconsciously so, flowers that mortal eyes ever gazed upon. Having become restless in this idle employ, and heartsick at my unappreciated efforts to win a love which I have concluded can never be mine, I have determined to wander back to my old home and become once more the stern old bachelor of former days;" and his looks more than his words, which he had intended should be indifferently careless, revealed the disappointments of his heart and the dreariness of the future which he had pictured for himself.

"Why do you talk thus? Your words distress me more than I can express. Surely the fair Lena—"

"Flora, Flora!" and he caught her hand tightly in his own, while his dark eyes looked intently into hers; "you cannot suppose—you certainly have not supposed—that Miss Lena was aught else to me than a friend in whose society I could sometimes forget the stern destiny that ruled my lonely life? Flora, it is you I love with all the ardor of my being—it is you whom I would shield from the thousand ills that must beset an orphan's life, and upon whose future I would lavish every pleasure that a devoted heart and attendant wealth are able to bestow. But you do not love me, and I dare not longer remain in the presence of one who wields such an influence over me. I must go, but the desolate hours which the future holds in reserve for me shall be gilded by sweet memories of you."

For the first time during their long intercourse his head drooped and his resolute nature yielded to impulsive grief.

"Do not," said Flora, laying her hands tenderly upon his

bowed head; "you do not know me. I could whisper in your ear words so obnoxious that you would leave me with a cold, haughty look, your love withered, and disgust, as a nauseous weed, filling its place. Conscious of this, could I dare to win a love I knew I could not keep?"

"Flora, in this your attempted consolation you would take away the only hope of my future. Spare me, I beg of you—spare this misery; I do not deserve it;" and he rose to his feet and paced the floor in evident distress.

Poor girl! She was spellbound before him; she dared not utter another word, through fear that she should unconsciously increase that distress.

At last he stopped before her and looked for an instant into her pale face; then, clasping her form ardently to his heart, he whispered,

"Speak those fearful words, Flora! It is better to hate than to love you so madly, yet so hopelessly! But I warn you of an entire failure. Speak to me, that I may prove my words!"

Flora did not struggle to release herself. The world was cold, friendship unsatisfying; prolonged struggles, interwoven with disappointments and shattered hopes, had wearied her young heart, and she sank down for a brief moment, happy and peaceful, resting upon promises of this new affection. His words aroused her.

"Must I speak? oh, must I dispel this blissful dream for ever? It is sweet to have such a noble friend, such a strong arm thrown about me to shield me from every rude blast that may burst around me. Why should I not love him? Why may I not?" Thus ran her silent questionings.

"Flora!"

The tender accents of that voice breathed so closely to her ear dispelled her thoughts.

"I cannot, Mr. Fenn. You will love me no longer when I reveal to you my ignominious birth—my despicable parentage."

"Is my love precious to you, then?" he asked, quietly.

"Very precious;" and bursting into tears, she hid her face in his bosom.

"Then I care not what your origin may have been. Give me yourself just as you are—beautiful, and pure, and good, as I now behold you—and I ask for no prying into the dark past, for glorious will be my future, and with that I shall be content. Will you, dearest—will you be mine?—mine Flora?"

"No, no, no! I cannot—I cannot!" she almost shrieked, starting to her feet. "You must know all, and I must tell you."

Her cheek was blanched, her lips bloodless; and with a burning light in her eye, she exclaimed, with mournful pathos,

"Oh, what a wrong I have done you! But I did not intend it. I thought you were my friend—a very dear one, I knew, yet my friend, no more;" and she threw her arms about his neck, as she whispered, "But you do not know I am an Indian girl—yes, an Indian girl, my mother the poor, despised—"

"Impossible! Flora, you are mad! Tell me this is not so."

"Did I not warn you?" she asked, looking at him steadily with her burning eyes. "I knew you would hate me. O God! life was a sad boon, bestowed upon one like myself;" and she sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

"But you said I would hate you, dear Flora," said Mr. Fenn, approaching her; "in this you were mistaken. I love you as dearly as ever. Pardon my words, if in the expression of surprise they led you to distrust me."

She was standing beside him with her keen eye bent full upon his face. With a smile full of sadness, she said, quietly,

"The scorn upon the white man's lips betrays his heart.

Ah! will not the cold, chilling blast of memory sighing ever through his rose-covered bower cause his ardor to flag and his joys to wither? Leave me. The daughter of the red man loves you too well to scatter death and desolation over your brightest hopes. Leave me, oh, leave me!"

"Flora, what means this? Do not talk so wildly," he exclaimed, with deep emotion, stretching out his hands toward her. There was no scorn in that pleading look, no waning love in the gaze of tenderness that beamed upon her.

"Forgive me. The spirit of my mother must have been speaking through me. It was not I—oh, not I!" and clasping her hands tightly together, she fell upon her knees beside him.

"Then you will not drive me from you? Tell me, Flora, that you will be mine—that my hand may ever shield you from those piercing blasts of which you just spoke, and crown you the queen of flowers to adorn my noonday bower. Tell me, shall it be so?"

"As you like it!" and her head drooped upon his shoulder.

A happy heart sent up its thanksgiving of praise that night from the little upper chamber of that humble home. "Lonely no more," it softly murmured, as Flora laid herself down to rest. "Not alone. Though months may come between us before we meet, he will not forget the holy pledge he enshrined in a joyous heart this night. Oh no, he will not forget;" and a feeble sigh came struggling up through her present rounded joy, as memory brought the little withered forget-me-not and placed it tremblingly beside her new-found love.

Lura's keen glance detected the unusual light in the eye of her friend, and the happiness that lighted her beautiful face, contrasting it with the gloom which had settled down upon her own days and nights, murmured, but was silent.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CONFESSION.

THE evening for the anticipated *fete*, as the lively Mattie had been pleased to term the little party to which she had invited Flora, at last arrived, but no bright anticipations or dreams of splendid conquests came to light up her face, as she walked leisurely homeward in and out of the evening shadows that began to cluster in the streets, thinking, wondering, meditating, yet without a single thought of the scene just before her, in which she was expected to act such a prominent part. Her visit to Mrs. Lane had been unusually prolonged, and the sadness occasioned by it had extinguished the steady light which for the past few days had shed a peaceful glow upon her life. Poor unhappy Mrs. Lane! Yet she always seemed pleased when she felt the touch of Flora's hand upon her own, and the warm kiss of salutation upon her cheek, but to-night the apparent pleasure had died away, and a deeper despondency than Flora had before witnessed clogged her spirits.

"Unhappy, miserable woman that I am!" she exclaimed, vehemently, as the friendly inquiries of her visitor fell upon her ear; "and God has proved himself my tormentor. Already have I heard his voice in my ear, exclaiming, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.'"

Flora dropped the thin white hand she was holding, started back, and a sensation of horror crept over her, but another glance at that pale, bowed face and the large, sightless eyes restored the pity in her heart; and keeling by her side, she fondly pressed the sufferer's hand to her lips.

"I beseech you, my dear friend," she pleaded, "speak

not so unkindly of Him whose very nature is sympathy and love. His purposes are wise, and he never would have afflicted you if it were not for your good in some way."

"My sins do not merit such an intolerable scourging. Was it such an unpardonable offence that I should idolize the beautiful child he gave me? Was it not a greater one that I turned against you because you would not consent to become my tool and carry out my purposes regarding her, and that for this reason I used my power to make you miserable? I feel the hand resting upon mine tremble, Flora: well it may. Did you know all, you would shrink from my presence and leave me to sink beneath my fate. Yet you know not how I have yearned to unburden my bosom to you. I cannot live if you hate me. No, no, my child! Your love is the only bright thing of earth to me. I cannot lose it."

In her agony of soul she half arose from her chair, but sank back again with a groan of despair. Flora was shocked, but her duty lay plainly before her. Could this be the beautiful mother of Kitty Lane, whose smiling face seemed to bear indisputable testimony to the purity of the soul within?

"You do not hate me now," interrupted Flora. "Love is as precious to me as it can be to you. If, then, the unburdening of your heart will be a relief to you, do not, I beseech you, hesitate; and I promise you, by the love of her who once sat with us in this very room, and whose gentle spirit is perhaps this very moment hovering tenderly over us, that all shall be freely forgiven, and all that is unpleasant in the past shall for ever be excluded from our future intercourse. Will you trust me?"

A low moan of anguish was her only reply.

"Do not refer to it," continued Flora, "unless it will be a relief to you to do so. I have no curiosity regarding it; my sensitive nature recoils from the presentation of every dark picture. Would to God that I could rob the gallery

of the past of many that now hang there and stare down upon me with sunken eyes and ghastly faces! But still I would endure much if thus I might be instrumental in shedding upon your heart but a single ray of peace and consolation."

"Flora, I am adding new sorrows to your dreary life. I did not mean to do it," she said, drawing the bowed head tenderly to her bosom; "I was wrong in recalling the past. But so it is; the tears which I know are staining your beautiful cheeks make me calm, and give strength to my determination to reveal to you what I have long desired to do. It shall be very brief. Rest here, my child, near my heart, that I may feel your first recoil as I proceed.

"The first evening I saw you, Flora, a strange spirit took possession of me, and I determined to win you to myself for an especial object. Harry, Kitty's cousin, loved her, and in my heart I determined you should come between her and that love. I could not consent to my beautiful child's becoming the wife of a beggar. Your beauty I believed would fascinate his boyish heart. There was another, a frequent visitor at the house, to whom I had given my idol. He was rich and noble, and a high position in life awaited her who received the honor of his hand. Oh, how have my fondest plans been thwarted—my joys and anticipations blasted! I saw with mortification and anger the burning glances that person cast upon you, but I still was calm. No heart but my own knew the struggle through which it was passing, and impatiently I waited for the weeks which we were to spend in New York. These, I fondly hoped, would crown my anticipations with a happy consummation. Yet I loved you with all the affection I could spare from my child. Little Clara was rapidly recovering, and I was relieving the nurse for a few moments, when I was summoned to the parlor to receive a visitor. A lady met me, as I entered, whom I had never seen before. After a few apologies and preliminaries she informed me that she had called from a

sense of duty, to give me a little information concerning a person who, she understood, was a daily associate of my daughter; she then proceeded to inform me that from positive proof which she had in her possession she knew you to be an Indian girl—your mother a squaw, your father a white trader—”

Flora started suddenly to her feet, her face deathly pale, and her whole frame trembling with violent emotion.

“I told you that you would recoil from me, but it is not time to hate me fully yet. Come and sit down, that I may feel you near me, for I must finish now.”

Flora obeyed, and she proceeded:

“You can readily guess the name of my visitor, who could have been no other than Lena Edwards. This information had not the effect of altering my plans, save as I hoped thereby to further them. Mr. Fenn certainly would not love an Indian girl, and once more the coast would be clear. Now you hate me?” she said, with bitterness, as she felt the hand upon her lap suddenly tremble.

“No,” replied Flora; “I do not hate you; I was only wondering.”

Not seeming to notice the interruption, Mrs. Lane continued:

“Of course I told him, when, much to my chagrin, he said, quickly, ‘I have heard the same story before, but I do not believe it. I am not prepared,’ he continued, ‘to say that Miss Lena is willfully in error in regard to it, but the source of her information cannot be reliable, and never until I hear it from Miss Flora’s own lips will I believe so base a slander.’ He spoke emphatically, and I knew that on that point I had failed. When, notwithstanding all my kindness, you refused to remain with me, then came my cruel injustice—my revenge. I knew you had not stolen that brooch, but it could not be found. I had no other means of revenge. The rest you know. Before you is the wreck of a once beautiful, willful, ambitious woman; I am

helpless now. The serpent is deprived of its fangs. Yet spurn me if you will; my cup is full. How can it be worse, if it overflows?"

Her head sank heavily upon her hand, and she remained silent a long time.

Flora attempted to console her by breathing into her ear the vow she had taken to love her still; then came the sweet promise of peace and forgiveness that she so loved. Yet Mrs. Lane moved not.

"You may leave me now," she said, at last, without raising her head. "Call again to-morrow." Her voice was steady and chilling, and Flora arose to obey.

She did not notice, as she entered the street, that the sun had long since set and twilight was deepening about her, for her thoughts were busy.

"He knew it, yet did not believe it, till my own lips confirmed it."

This, then, was the reason that he so soon recovered from the shock.

"Yes, two years ago, on the night of the party at Mrs. Edwards', I am sure I heard those hateful words. Yet he loved me! How strange! I am sure I never could have loved him did the red man's blood course in his veins. No, no! Wehegan, the Indian warrior, was bold, yet I never loved him. From what a fate the kind-hearted Edgarton saved me! Yet why not? Why should I despise my lineage, and cling with more tenacity to a people who are only in part my own? Edgarton was wrong. The white race spurns half of my nature—yes, all, since the people among whom I was born would have loved and honored me. Oh, Edgarton, noble Edgarton, how soon your own heart undeceived you!"

Thus soliloquizing, she had reached the little gate and stood at the door. The night-shades clustered thickly about the humble cottage, and for the first time she awoke to the consciousness that she was late. As she gained the door

she felt her dress suddenly grasped and held by an unseen hand. With a faint cry, she sprang forward; but finding herself unable to effect her release, and her vision becoming more adapted to the darkness that surrounded her, she turned to behold a crouching form beneath the lilac bush with bowed head resting upon her knees, and the whole figure indicative of the deepest despondency. One hand, slightly extended, was holding with eagerness a portion of Flora's dress. Yet the form moved not, nor did a sound escape the lips of the abject figure.

"Who are you," asked Flora, in alarm, "and what are you doing here? Let me go," she pleaded, "or speak to me. Tell me who you are."

There was pity in her tones now, for her alarm had gone, fled before the statue-like figure, so motionless, so much the semblance of unutterable despair.

"It is I, Miss Flora," at last said a plaintive voice, yet the figure moved not, and the head still rested upon the knees.

"Clara! Is it you, Clara?" asked Flora, tenderly, placing her hand upon the shoulders of the girl.

"Yes, Miss Flora; I was going up to my mother's grave, but I knew you would let me stay with you."

"Why are you here, poor child?" and she raised the drooping head gently from its recumbent posture.

"Because I will not stay with Mrs. Day," she answered, rising to her feet. "My mother would not let me stay if she could speak to me, and I will not—no, I will not. She is cruel, and I will not love her. I'll never speak to her again, never."

Flora took her kindly by the hand, and led her into the house. It was not the first time that she had witnessed manifestations of an unfavorable temper in the child over whom she exercised a partial superintendence; and knowing that the present ebullition arose from slight cause, she wisely concluded to let the matter rest for the present.

Uncle Billy had arrived during her absence, and his hearty words greeted her as she entered :

"How now, shipmate? Pretty as ever, I see. But what little craft have you got in tow now?"

There was something exhilarating in the tones of Uncle Billy's voice that never failed to have a decided effect upon each inmate of his "little workhouse," as he termed their home. Mrs. Clark was sitting in her easy-chair, looking much better than she had for many weeks. Lura was looking happy and contented, although the tea was nearly spoiled by reason of the protracted waiting. Uncle Billy, however, pertinaciously refused to eat a morsel until the round table was filled, and Flora soon forgot her manifold annoyances and joined pleasantly in the hilarity of the hour. A little changing of the plates and a little closer placing of the chairs made room for the new-comer, and soon all were busy, laughing and discussing the delicacies before them, some of which had that day arrived on board the *Lady Ann*.

At last Uncle Billy dropped his knife and fork, and raising his large shaggy eyebrows, looked intently into the face of the little girl, who sat opposite to him.

"What on airth can you be looking at, brother?" at last asked Mrs. Clark, who had been intently eyeing him. "You haven't moved your gaze for five minutes, and these strawberries are 'most gone."

"Well, ain't there more? What's the use of plaguing me? Don't it say somewhere in that big book which used to lie always upon the table in the corner, 'I have fish to fry that ye know not of'? Perhaps not in just those words, but that's the sense of it."

"'I have meat to eat,'" suggested Mrs. Clark, in a disturbed manner.

"Well, as I was going to say," chimed in Uncle Billy, "there is something in that face over there which keeps telling me of long voyages over salt water, terrible howling

gales, tattered brown sails, and curled lips far back somewhere, can't just say where," he continued, musingly. "Little girl, what's your name?" he asked, abruptly.

"Clara Saunders, sir," was the timid reply.

"Saunders? Saunders? I never knew any Saunders, yet by Jove! I've seen that face. Never mind; I'll be cruising around among the old sails and rigging of memory. I'll find it. Lura, let's finish that box of berries; I'm terribly afraid they won't keep."

"Only one hour to dress," suggested Lura, as Flora arose from the table.

"Plenty of time; fifteen minutes will answer my purpose fully."

"With my assistance," replied Lura, and the two girls left the room.

"Permit me to adorn you," said Lura, after the blue silk had been properly arranged; and reaching down to the bottom of Flora's trunk, she succeeded in bringing to light a hidden box containing a full set of pearls, one of Edgerton's last gifts before he said farewell for ever. "These looked so pretty once, worn in among your dark curls; and you know he used to say I exhibited great skill in this department."

A moan of anguish was in Flora's heart, but she suppressed it, and said, calmly,

"Never, Lura; my present position as a poor music teacher and charity pupil does not call for costly pearls with which to mock my poverty and give a false impression to the world. No, no; put them back again. This simple pin shall be my only ornament."

Lura looked disappointed and vexed, but obeyed without a word.

Mattie, according to previous arrangement, received Flora in the dressing-room, but whispered in her ear before they went into the parlor that her stately sister had arrived a

few hours before with a select party of friends, and was terribly cross because Mr. Fenn had left the city.

"She had been anticipating the recall of her old lover at this evening's entertainment. The season being over, this was her last chance. I pity her; don't you? But I suppose you know no more about it than I—perhaps not as much, as I have had the benefit of a series of observations;" and the lively girl rattled on while Flora was arranging her slightly disordered curls without hearing a word of what she was saying, heartily wishing all the time that she were safely back in her quiet home.

"Whom under the sun have you picked up there?" asked the stately Miss Goodale of her sister, who, after having introduced Flora to a circle of her particular friends, had left her and come around where she was standing.

Mattie's face wore an expressive smile, but she did not deign to answer.

"Very pretty, isn't she, Mr. Boyd?" she asked, turning to a gentleman near.

"Very pretty," he answered. "I have met her before—have seen her often in the street. It is a face one cannot be mistaken in," he added, as if fearing some one might doubt his assertion.

But the fair hostess of the evening had no occasion to do so; and with another peculiar smile, which those who knew her well could readily interpret, she hurried away.

"A most provoking child," remarked her sister, looking angrily after her. "Some strange freak she has taken into her head, inviting that nobody here to-night. I declare, I could cry with vexation."

"She looks uncomfortable," suggested her companion. "I dare say she wishes herself out of this as much as you do."

"It would be a consolation, were I sure that she does not enjoy it. No doubt it is the first time she ever saw anything but a rag carpet."

It was true that Flora was feeling as uncomfortable as even Miss Kate could desire, but the lively, cheering words of her friend, who was often near her, helped to drive away her embarrassment and arouse her conversational powers, which were naturally very brilliant. In a short time she had drawn about her a lively company of both sexes, who were richly enjoying her dissertations upon her pet subjects, music and flowers.

"You play, of course?" remarked one of her companions. "No one could be such a theorist on sweet sounds without knowing how to produce them."

Flora blushed deeply. She had really forgotten the part which she was expected to take in the entertainment. The company, instead of being composed of a few select friends, as it had been represented to her, was a large, brilliant collection from the most fashionable circles. She could not most certainly place herself conspicuously before them. Mattie would never expect it or ask it.

"That is a summary conclusion from slight premises, truly," she answered, quietly. "I do play a little after the fashion of my own simple theories for my own especial amusement," she might have added "and profit," but she did not in words.

"Ah! there is Miss Kate just seated at the piano," remarked another. "She is a fine singer."

Flora thought so too, as the deep, full voice fell upon her ear. But more than half the melody was lost in the general hum which seemed to fill the room. All were evidently enjoying the singing, for in the occasional hush of conversation many complimentary remarks could be heard regarding it. The unsophisticated Flora, however, could not readily explain the apparent contradiction. If they were so filled with admiration, so unwilling that she should leave the instrument, why did they not listen to her?

Another and another followed, when Flora noticed for the first time that Mattie was standing beside her.

"Now for my favorite song," she whispered, bending her head down to Flora's ear, as the last performer glided gracefully away.

Mr. Marvin offered his arm to escort her, as he whispered, "We shall be so very happy."

"Do excuse me," pleaded Flora. "Indeed, indeed—" She had almost said, "I am not well," but Mattie's beseeching look brought back the color to her lips and cheeks, and with trembling limbs and a choking, suffocating feeling, she suffered herself to be led away. Mattie was beside her; with an encouraging smile and pleasantly turned words, she strengthened her for the effort.

Flora touched the key lightly by way of prelude, then attempted to commence the song designated by her friend. But her voice choked; not a sound was heard. A low titter passed around the immediate circle, but a lively repartee from Mattie turned the laugh in another direction, and hid from general observation her friend's embarrassment. In another moment a voice clear and lute-like rose above the warbler's head and silenced every other sound.

Not a laugh, not a word, was audible, as the sweetly distinct tones rose and fell in tuneful cadence, or floated in mid air with one prolonged trill, then fell away in softer, purer tones, as the feathered songster bears away his evening song to hush its lingering melody in the distant grove.

The voice was still, and a subdued murmur of applause succeeded. Flora, raising her eyes, beheld for the first time that evening a gentleman in black, wearing a heavy gold fob-chain, standing opposite to her. He was looking at her, and for a moment their eyes met.

"Just one more," pleaded several voices. But the hot blood rushed back to her heart, as a voice close behind her reached her ear:

"I have heard for a fact that she is half Indian; would you believe it?" "She must have learned that song in her native woods," said another. "It was as beautiful as her-

self," remarked still another. Flora heard no more. Mr. Marvin's arm was proffered her, and she moved away. Shortly afterward the kind hostess yielded to her earnest entreaties, and at an early hour she was sent home, as she came, in the Goodales' private carriage.

"Everybody knows it," she said to herself, when again alone. "He never will—he never shall—marry a poor despised Indian girl. Oh, what a wretched fate is mine! If I had the power, I would return this very night to the only people that will deem my love worthy, and die among them."

Little Clara was not asleep when she returned, and the slender arms that were entwined caressingly about her as her head sunk upon the pillow solaced and comforted her. It was sweet to feel, when weary and perplexed with life's burdens, often too heavy and grievous to be borne, that there is somewhere among the great multitude of human hearts similarly throbbing one that contains for us a soothing drop of affection. But when that heart comes and tenders its simple gift and with answering love applies it to the sinking one, the burden grows lighter and new strength is imparted to the soul, new zeal, new determinations.

"Do you love me?" asked Flora, as she returned the fond caress.

"Love you?" she replied, earnestly. "Yes, I love you more than all the rest of the world."

"Then will you not, for my sake, return to little Minnie, be her true and constant friend; and when anything perplexes you, think, 'Flora has many things to make her unhappy as well as I, and I will be very patient'? Will you, Clara?"

"I don't know, Miss Flora. I hate Mrs. Day; she does not speak kindly to me, and never smiles on me, as my mother used to do; and when Minnie cries, she says I do not take care of her. No, no, Miss Flora. I hate her; I cannot go back. I love you, but I hate Mrs. Day."

A long time did Flora talk to her of the future through which she must pass, of the patience and forbearance necessary to bring her happily through the many trials life had in store for her, and finally of the great Source from whom all blessings must be obtained which will make us useful and good.

"Everybody loves you," urged Clara.

"Oh no; very few love me, Clara. We must learn our lessons together. Will you not begin to-night, that I may not always feel that I am struggling alone?"

Clara sighed deeply. "I do not want to be any better than you are now," she replied, meekly; "but I will think of it till morning;" and with a good-night kiss, she turned upon her pillow as if to sleep.

In the morning, without a hesitating word, she promised to return to little Minnie and be very good, very patient, and the lesson was never forgotten.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

AT SEA AND IN PORT.

“**Y**OU were most insufferably stupid in your selection of books,” said Lena Edwards to her brother the third morning of their voyage out from New York.

All the scenes of interest and amusement on board the great vessel were completely exhausted, and the restless young lady looked out upon the boundless waters over which they were passing with a peevish, discontented look. A book was lying upon her lap, which had been opened but a short time when she pronounced it a bore, and closed it with a look of disgust upon her pretty face.

“Here is one that you will perhaps like better,” said her brother, at the same time handing her a neatly-bound volume.

“Thorny Way,” she said, pettishly, grasping it and glancing at its title. “Selfish as usual—kept me poring over this dry trash while you were feasting on unquestionable delicacies. ‘The gem of the present age,’” she continued, running her eye over the “Notices of the press,” which accompanied it, “‘By one who knows how to pity the lonely traveler, footsore and weary. Having just traveled life’s thorny way, the author would scatter over the path where others may follow a few hardy, unpretending flowers to cheer them in such a dreary pilgrimage.’”

“There is something about that book,” remarked the brother, as Lena turned over the leaves, “that makes me feel a little uncomfortable. I confess I could not help thinking of poor Phelura all the way through it, particu-

larly in the closing chapters. Do you think she was always treated rightly in our family?" he asked, after a pause, at the same time placing his long, taper fingers over the page upon which his sister was intently gazing.

"Better than she has treated herself since she left us, I have no doubt," was the pettish reply. "I hope, however, that this will prove interesting. Eighteen days more in such a prison as this would almost make me enjoy a shipwreck, or anything which would create an excitement."

"Why did you become so soon fatigued at your favorite game of whist last evening? See, father is enjoying it hugely at this moment with his new-found friends, and mother looks unusually contented in that group of matronly ladies."

Lena was not listening to her brother's conversation; and with a demonstration of his usual fondness for his petted goatee, he walked slowly and with measured steps to the other end of the saloon, where the two daughters of the Honorable Theodore Chapin were laughing and chatting the morning away over their embroidery.

It was not until a late hour that Lena closed the book, which had long held her with its fascinating spell, and with something like remorse weighing heavily upon her spirits retired to her state-room. The day had been bright and beautiful. Soft breezes had fanned the dreamy loungers upon the deck or winged themselves cheerily through the open windows of the gay saloon with their refreshing coolness. But the sun had sunk behind a mountain of clouds, and the sky was dark and portentous. An impenetrable gloom meanwhile settled down around the gallant ship, which was ploughing recklessly in the trough of the gradually-increasing billows.

Lena sat down by the open window and listened to the desolate roaring of the waves, gazing out listlessly into the darkness. The wind howled dolorously, and the sound of monotonous footsteps mingled in the chorus. A low knock

was heard upon the door, and Lena, slowly rising, opened it to admit her mother.

“Do you know that there is to be a heavy gale—a storm at sea?” she said, almost wildly, as she entered.

“It looks very much like it,” said Lena, calmly.

“It is dreadful. Ah, my child! a fearful foreboding has taken possession of me. I am sure that something terrible is to happen to us.”

“To punish us for our transgressions?” Lena replied, with face calm and placid as before. “To tell you the truth, mother, my opinion is that we deserve it. What a game we have been playing! And the thought of a discovery is to me this moment more appalling than the approaching storm which you seem to dread so much.”

“We have done nothing so terribly bad, I am sure,” replied her mother, with great emotion—“nothing but what Lady Anna would approve.”

“Oh, mother, I can see nothing good that I have done in my whole life,” cried Lena, passionately. “Poor sister! We—yes, *we*—heaped heavy burdens upon her; and when she was unable longer to bear them, we permitted her without a struggle to go forth into the world alone and unprotected.”

A loud peal of thunder burst immediately over them with a tremendous crash, and with a shriek Lena threw herself upon the couch and buried her face in the pillow, while her mother, pale and trembling, stood leaning heavily against the side of the state-room.

Another knock, loud and imperious, was heard upon the door, and still another, before the affrighted mother could command strength to open it.

“Don’t be frightened, Lena,” exclaimed her brother, as he entered. “The captain says there is no danger if he meets with no impediment, but the ship is flying at a rapid rate, and it is so dark that nothing can be seen ahead.”

Lena did not move or show any signs of consciousness, but the mother breathed more freely.

"Lena is very much frightened," she said, quite calmly, as her son ceased speaking, "but she will get over it."

Another flash, and again the thunders rolled and reverberated through the vaulted sky, sending terror and dismay to many a throbbing heart on board of that tempest-tossed ship, as it battled bravely and victoriously with each opposing billow. An hour passed. Who that has not been in a similar position can conceive of the mountain of self-reproaches and silent heart-communings which can be compressed into that apparently short space of time, an hour?

It was past midnight. The thunders still muttered heavily in the distance, while the lightnings flashed about the masts and the rain fell heavily upon the deck. Fears were subsiding in many timid hearts, and weariness led some to seek repose. Even Lena could look upon the past with a less accusing conscience, and her poor sister's wrongs appeared of less magnitude, as Nature's frowns were clearing away.

The mother and daughter were conversing upon their future plans, and wondering if, after all, they had succeeded in keeping everything from one member of the family which it would be improper for him to communicate; for, as Lena suggested, "if they inquire of father about anything, he will tell them the truth, and perhaps spoil the whole."

When, lo! a crash which shook the noble ship and caused it for a moment to reel, then sway heavily backward into its former course, sent redoubled terror to every heart on board, and shriek after shriek was heard from every side. The state-room doors were thrown open, and gentlemen came hurrying out to learn the cause of such an unusual sensation, while the ladies flocked together in the saloon with lips and cheeks of ashy hue to learn what consolation, if any, could be afforded.

"Quick! man the pumps!" shouted a voice which could

be distinctly heard above the general confusion. "Man the pumps, or we are lost!"

In the darkness the vessel had encountered a heavily-laden merchant ship which was lying to until the storm should have passed, and the collision was likely to prove fatal to all on board.

"Oh, mother," exclaimed Lena, with an almost frenzied expression, "God will punish us! I cannot die, mother! Can you not pray? Why did you not teach me to be good, honorable and true, instead of the vile hypocrite which I am?"

But the mother moved not, and her pale face wore a rigid expression, as though Death had already commenced his terrible work.

"O God!" cried Lena, with uplifted hands, "I have heard that thou couldst pity! Save, oh save, and atonement shall be fully offered for the past, and my future days shall be consecrated to thee!"

"We are lost!" cried a voice close to her elbow; "the leaks are too large; the pumps cannot save us!" and as the water came dashing in below, a rush was made for the decks.

"Come, sister, our only hope now is the life-boats. See! father and mother have both gone; will you not go?"

"Tell our poor sister I died repenting all the wrongs I have done her! And Flora—"

What could she say to Flora? Nothing in that moment; and taking the arm of her brother, she was led, or almost carried, to the deck.

What a scene was here! Children screaming, clinging frantically to their mothers, women wringing their hands, moaning in their despair, some audibly praying, others silently bowing before the God of their fathers, while all around was confusion and hurrying to and fro, the loud shouting of the captain and the answering words of the crew, as they sounded through the darkness, while

the boats were lowering and the pumps working vigorously for the lives of nearly two hundred human beings, who would soon find a watery grave, if their labors ceased.

In a short time the boats were ready.

“Pass the women and children!” shouted the captain, and one by one they were handed below. Cheering words were passed from mouth to mouth, as the boats were filled, when the shout, “A man overboard!” sent the blood rushing back to every heart. Efforts were made for his rescue, but in vain. In the darkness no one could tell who it was. Wives called upon their husbands, sisters upon their brothers, but the boats were separating, and great haste was made to escape the sinking vessel.

Oh, how drearily the hours rolled away! How slowly night unfolded back her curtains and let in the blissful light of morning! But the glorious light at last came, gradually, steadily, up from the east, spreading far and wide her golden pinions, and the great world opened its slumbering eyes, smiled and called it day.

There were none, however, who greeted it more joyfully than the disheartened occupants of those open boats which were floating, they knew not whither, out upon the trackless ocean. They had separated in the darkness, but as soon as it was light, they came together again, and in a few moments the name of one was called who would never again respond on earth. Mr. Edwards had found his resting-place down in the fathomless chambers of the great deep. All others that were on board the ill-fated vessel were saved. But a deep gloom seized the whole party, as once more the frail boats moved forward, anxiously hoping to find some escape from their perilous position.

Lena and her mother sat crouched together, seemingly unconscious of each other, and the words of sympathy which were spoken in their hearing, moodily meditating upon their present position and the great danger which had befallen them. All had been lost—the elegant wardrobe

which it had taken months to collect, the jewels, the bright anticipations which had been associated with each, all were gone. Mingling with this was the sad, sad grief of their bereavement. The husband and father, unsocial and ascetic as he often was, and much as he seemed in the way of their future plans—it was very sad to think of him as cold and lifeless for ever, and long-slumbering affections were awakened and tears of bitter sorrow were shed in memory of the departed one.

All day long the frail boats floated away upon the broad waters, bearing their helpless freight, so full of loneliness and woe. Then the night came down upon them, and the small specks which had been watched all day with strained vision, as if linked to them by some fraternal tie, were lost from sight; and Lena once more from the fullness of her heart prayed earnestly for a guiding hand to lead them safely through their present perils, repeating again and again her vows of renunciation of all the pure eyes of Jehovah might see erring in her, and her deep contrition for all her past misdeeds.

Thus the hours of another long, dreary night with snail-like pace crept away. At daybreak—thrice welcome sight!—a large sailing-vessel was seen approaching them. New life seemed suddenly breathed into every heart in the boats. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved high in the air, while shouts of rejoicing rang lustily forth, and were lost in the clear morning breeze that was blowing bracingly around them.

About noon all present were on board the *Constitution*, when they then ascertained that only one other boat-load had been rescued before them, in which number Edgar Edwards was not to be found. For many hours the vessel cruised around in that vicinity, hoping to recover more of the missing ones, but as night came on, a fresh breeze propelled them onward, bearing away many anxious, bleeding hearts whose husbands, fathers or brothers were thus left to their uncertain fate.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE TIE SUNDERED.

SOME time after the events narrated in our last chapter, Uncle Billy sat by the window that looked out into the little garden, busily engaged with his morning paper.

"Ho, ho!" he exclaimed, as he read aloud: "'The *Arcadia*, on the night of the 4th, ran into a heavily-laden merchant vessel, and sank in a few hours after. About half the passengers were picked up by the *Constitution*; the rest are supposed to have perished.'"

Lura was standing in the middle of the room when he finished reading, pale and motionless, but he did not notice her.

"Is that all?" she asked, in a voice so hoarse and deep that Mrs. Clark from an adjoining room inquired feebly, "What is it, my child?"

"Oh, my dear friend," exclaimed Lura, approaching her and throwing her arms passionately about her neck, "perhaps they are all lost, and I—"

Tears choked her utterance, and Uncle Billy, seeing the distress he had so unconsciously caused, came forward to the rescue.

"No, no, my poor girl! Don't you see that half of the passengers were saved? And it is just as likely that your folks were in that crowd as in the other. We shall know more about it soon, so don't grieve until you are sure you have something to grieve about. I tell you what," he continued, after a pause: "there's enough of sorrow—real, substantial, up-and-down sorrow—for us to cry about, without

our running any risk of finding out that, after all, we wasted our tears when there was no occasion for it."

Lura felt comforted by his blunt consolation in spite of herself. Perhaps they were saved. She would calm her fears and wait. Yet notwithstanding this resolution, a fearful foreboding took possession of her spirits.

The sudden shock, however, had a more serious effect upon her invalid friend, and with startling rapidity she sank lower and lower, until in the stillness of the next midnight hour she fell quietly and calmly asleep, to wake on earth no more.

The two girls bathed the cold, wrinkled face with their tears. Oh, what a dear friend she had been to them! How sweetly even now came up from the past not long remote those precious words of counsel and admonition her lips had often spoken! But they would speak no more. Death had broken the family chain; where now would the remaining links be scattered?

"Entered port at last," said Uncle Billy, laying his weatherbeaten hands upon the heads of the weeping girls. "She is safely moored, while we must blow about in the open sea a while longer. You are young, my girls, and will find much to make the rough voyage pleasant and cheerful, but such as I often grow discontented, and the waves rise high and toss us about so much because we find ourselves alone. It isn't pleasant to be alone in a storm, but poor old Uncle Billy will have to weather it somehow. She was the last I could call my own."

Here his head drooped, and the two girls forgot their own sorrow in witnessing the grief of that sturdy man.

"Shall you love us no more?" asked Lura, placing her arms tenderly about his neck. "You will not be alone while we remain upon the ocean with you."

"Perhaps not," he answered, sorrowfully. "But you will lay to a great way off, outside of hailing distance. But it's all right if I were only like her—I mean as she was, so sure about her compass and chart. An unseen hand she felt

always guided her," he continued, musingly; and then, as if anxious to avoid any further conversation, he arose and left the room.

The solemn succeeding days passed, and the humble cottage seemed deserted and dreary. Mrs. Clark was silently slumbering in the shade at the cemetery, Uncle Billy had wandered restlessly forth no one knew whither, and the two girls, lonely and sad, returned from a long walk and stood upon the threshold.

"You dread to enter," said Lura, as they turned and looked out upon the street; "but it seems to me it will be still more dreary at Mrs. Lane's. If you yield to her pressing invitation—demand, I had almost said—I shall pity you every evening when I think of you listening to her murmurings and wailings."

"Your pity will certainly be worth something in my unpleasant position. But what else is left for me to do? To be sure, I might earn my board by teaching out of school, but this might be even harder than the effort to make Mrs. Lane happier, and perhaps do her good. In fact, I feel that I must go. A little more than a year remains before I must leave school, and something seems to compel me to pursue this course during that time."

"A letter for somebody," Lura remarked, as the post-boy approached and looked at the number of the house and then at the bundle he held in his hand. "For you, I suppose," she continued, as the letter was proffered, and a cloud passed over her face.

She was right. Mr. Fenn had not neglected to write twice each week since he had left, and Flora, with some agitation, took the welcome missive into her hand. She had known, from the evening of Lura's first outburst of anger toward her, of the love she bore in her heart for her betrothed. She pitied her, and therefore always avoided every reference to the past which she thought would pain her.

"You need not put it away to read alone. I will excuse

you, knowing well I could not, or would not, wait for ceremony if it were mine."

These words were spoken very quietly, yet Flora well comprehended their deep, hidden import. She complied, however, with the suggestion, while Lura looked long and earnestly down the street, carelessly humming in a low, sweet voice a few snatches of her favorite song:

"Joys that we've tasted
 May sometimes return,
 But the torch, when once wasted,
 Oh, how can it burn?"

Flora refolded the letter and held it carelessly in her hand.

"May I ask you a question?" said Lura, turning abruptly toward her.

"Certainly; as many as you choose."

"When is Mr. Fenn to return to the city?"

"Perhaps next week."

"You said as many as I choose," she continued, with a smile, "so one more. He has heard of Mrs. Clark's death; what would he like to have you do now?"

Flora started; but truthful as she always was, she would not in the present instance turn aside from the truth—no, not even by an equivocation. Her voice was very low, as she answered:

"To become his wife."

"I expected as much. And you will comply?"

"No."

"You will not?"

"I cannot."

CHAPTER XXXV.

UNREST.

EDGARTON HALL had once been a splendid mansion, but at the time of which we write its external grandeur had been somewhat marred by age and the three successive generations who had lived, and many of whom had died, beneath its roof. The spacious grounds, with their groves of lofty primeval trees, the grassy lawns and lengthy hedges, the well-filled gardens and the gravel-walks had been robbed of their freshness and beauty by the lapse of years, and the moss of age and neglect clung undisturbed to the marble fountain and stained its silvery waters. Internally, the richness and splendor had not been suffered thus to be dimmed, for Lady Anna had not forgotten her luxurious girlhood's home, and as far as possible gratified her early acquired taste in the adorning of her present abode.

Charles Edgarton, the only son and undisputed heir of his father's estate, possessed somewhat of his mother's wild, dreamy spirit, tempered by the mildness and coolness of his English blood, which made him a pleasant companion, an ardent and most tenacious friend, though somewhat hasty and impetuous.

Upon an evening in the early summer, Edgarton, according to his usual custom, sat alone upon the broad portico overlooking the garden, whence the flowers sent up their refreshing fragrance, and watched the slowly retiring sun as it lingered upon the mountains, with its rays of purple and gold playing with the fleecy clouds which hovered near to catch its last good-night. Perhaps he was thinking of a little spot far away, and of a time when that same glorious

light faded slowly out, as he watched it from a little rocky eminence upon which he often sat listening for an airy footstep and the musical greeting of a silvery voice, for a smile rested upon his face and a light was shining in his calm blue eye. He slowly arose from his recumbent position, as his mother approached him, and invited her to a seat beside him.

"Pemberton Castle, from its elevated position above us, always steals our sunshine, and glows brilliantly in its setting glories long after we are enveloped in the evening shadows," remarked his mother, as she took the proffered seat, with her eyes fixed upon the distant towers of that ancient pile, which had for many years been the estate coveted by her for her darling child.

He looked earnestly at the face before him for a moment, then replied:

"In my opinion, its most fascinating beauties are seen from this place at this hour. But everything is beautiful when tinged by such a gorgeous sunset."

The mother remained thoughtfully silent for a few moments, then said, abruptly,

"I have just received another letter from Mrs. Edwards."

"Indeed," was the only comment.

"She is about to visit us with the family; and laying aside all past prejudices and family feeling, I have invited them to spend some time with us."

"Ah! she has reached the goal for which she was struggling, then," remarked the son, with more bitterness than she had ever observed in him before.

"I do not comprehend the meaning of your words," she replied, quickly. "Will you explain?"

"If necessary. The Edwards family, for reasons which you well know, have lost caste in the land of their birth, which might in a great measure be restored were they honored guests at Edgerton Hall, and my father's noble cousins might be induced to welcome them again to his

home. This, as you well know, would be the step toward a family recognition and their restoration to that position which Mrs. Edwards lost many years ago by her unfortunate marriage. This, as I asserted, has been the goal which her ambition for a long time has been striving to reach."

"You certainly must be mistaken; the invitation was wholly voluntary on my part."

"Undoubtedly. But will you give me the contents of her last epistles of which you just spoke? Her former communications have been so full of untiring solicitude for my peace and future happiness that I cannot for a moment imagine her zeal abated."

"You are prejudiced, my son," said Lady Edgerton, warmly, "and you suffer your animosity to overcome your better judgment. Mrs. Edwards' letters contained nothing but what you should have sought anxiously to ascertain. In an hour of foolish fancy you took under your care and protection a wild, giddy child who has since proved herself unworthy of your slightest thought, much more of the aid which you still persist in affording her. Was it wrong in a relative of your father to tell you this? It grieves me exceedingly to feel that, after all the information which we have received of this child's impudence, self-will, heartlessness and, worse than all, dishonesty, you still maintain your interest in her. I say it grieves me, and, more than this, the Lady Eveline is much offended about it."

The lips of the young man moved slightly, and the same look which the island fairy in her artlessness called "angry" for a moment lingered there.

"Pardon me my dear mother, for one moment, and I will tell you to what degree the important information which you have at three different times received from those kind, disinterested friends has affected me. In the first place, I do not believe in the obtruded love with which she is reported to have amazed the hopeful son and heir of the illustrious Edwards family. Neither do I believe in her

self-will in leaving the home my kindness provided for her without any other cause or provocation than that this same son and heir rejected the suit so unfemininely offered, or that in her fall she enticed the poor deluded 'Fury' from her home, into a cold, unfeeling world. Nor, in the third place, would a whole shipload of similar communications from such a source ever make me doubt the purity or honesty of Flora Hawes."

Lady Edgarton was enraged. All the fire of her Italian nature was aroused, and in this moment of her frenzy she forgot the prudence which had hitherto guided her movements and guarded her words for more than two years, as with blanched cheeks and lips she asked, hastily,

"Charles Edgarton, do you love that wretched Indian girl?"

The last words were hissed through her tightly closed teeth, but the ear for which they were intended distinctly heard them, and for a moment all his power of thought was paralyzed as they sank like poisoned arrows deep down into his aching heart.

The lady had revealed herself, and awaited his reply. Oh, how much hung upon his answer! He had promised to marry the Lady Eveline. Would she ever consent to become his if she should learn that his first affections had been bestowed upon such an unworthy object? This thought was extremely painful, and vision after vision of progressive greatness that was to cluster around the name of Edgarton vanished before it.

The young man arose and paced slowly and with measured step up and down the broad open piazza, yet he answered not.

The glory and brilliancy of Pemberton Castle died away. The sun had withdrawn his evening rays from among the clouds, and shadows dark and deep were falling all around them, but none darker or deeper than those that settled heavily down upon the heart of Edgarton and shut out the

once glowing future from his unhappy mother. At last, stopping short in his measured walk before his silent companion, he asked abruptly, but calmly,

“Will you tell me, mother, how long you have been in possession of such startling facts as you have just communicated?”

“For many months,” was the laconic answer.

“What was your reason for thus withholding the information from me?”

“My reasons were maternal, and as such should be considered sacred by my son,” she replied, coldly, and rising, entered the house.

A long, sleepless night was before her, as, full of anxiety and fearful forebodings, she walked her apartment.

“To think, after all,” she soliloquized, “that he should inform me that he totally disbelieved all the reports derogatory to the character of this hateful child! It is too provoking. And I have led him on so gently, fearing to excite his anger or indignation, lest my most cherished plans should be frustrated, and to-night I have spoiled all. Unhappy mother that I am! In three months more I hoped to see him the husband of Lady Eveline, yet I well know he does not love her. No, no; the worthy son of an illustrious sire, he loves an Indian girl. I know it; I saw it in his face to-night, notwithstanding his anger. Yes, he loves her;” and the passionate woman threw herself upon the sofa and wept aloud. “Yet there is room for effort,” she said, more calmly, as the storm of her grief passed away. “I must curb my emotion. He loves me, and by affection I may even yet win him to my purposes.”

Some weeks would elapse before the arrival of the Edwards family, and in the interval no efforts must be spared that would have a tendency toward the consummation of this one great object.

Early the next morning the Lady Eveline arrived at the hall to spend the day, as was her frequent custom, by the

urgent invitation of Lady Edgarton, who was very lonely without her. The cheerful faces that gathered around the little table in the great drawing-room at lunch showed no traces of any recent agitation. The vivacious young lady laughed and chatted merrily on, and the mother and son joined cheerfully in the enjoyment of the hour.

Their guest was not beautiful, but she had an acquired ease and grace which would have pleased, perhaps fascinated, one who had not known her, as Edgarton had, when none of these accomplishments had smoothed the irritability of her nature or covered up the blemishes of her girlish face. She was some years younger than Edgarton, and often, when a child, after pulling the ears of his favorite spaniel, upsetting a china vase in which his morning bouquet was cherished, or snapping from its frail stalk some petted flower before its beautiful leaves were unfolded to his gaze, she would elevate her diminutive figure with an assumed stateliness, and inform him that there was no use in his getting angry at her, that she was to be his wife and do just as she pleased. Whereupon the embryo husband most ungallantly asserted his disbelief in the whole affair, and determined within himself never to submit to such a repulsive alliance. She had changed, however, during his long absence in a distant land, and now graciously avowed her affection for all that he loved, admired his cherished flowers and permitted them to bloom and fade where nature intended they should, feeling a little annoyed at times, perhaps, that another hand did not pluck them for her, but her childish declaration was never employed as a corrective for any indisposition on his part. Thus he had in a manner forgotten his boyish dislike, and something like love had taken possession of his heart, as he beheld the affection that existed between her and his only parent, and felt the soothing, fostering power of the unnumbered little attentions which she ever appeared delighted to bestow on him.

Whole days they spent together, riding, walking, reading

or conversing, as the mood prompted, until Lady Edgarton's heart was made to rejoice with unbounded joy by her son's promising with filial duty to ask Lady Eveline for her hand. "Not for her fortune," he added, with a gracious smile, "as I have sufficient for all my future plans."

"Your aspirations cannot be very lofty," remarked his mother, pleasantly.

It was enough for her to know, however, that he would consent to the first; the second she was sure would take care of itself. Yet she knew not if his promise had been kept. How much she regretted having aroused the slumbering fires of what she was now sure was true affection! and her heart was much relieved of its weighty load when she saw his smiling face opposite her whom she hoped would shortly be his wife, and listened to the words of good-humored affability with which he graced the passing hour.

How deep, then, her grief and disappointment, when, a few days afterward, he announced his intention of going abroad for a few months!

"To America?" she asked, in surprise.

"No; to France, Italy and Germany, and wherever else in that direction fancy or inclination may lead me."

No amount of persuasion could affect his determination, and preparations were accordingly made for his departure.

Lady Eveline was inconsolable.

"I am not worthy of you now," he whispered in her ear, as they parted. "When I return, the hand I shall offer you will be purely yours to accept or reject, as your mature judgment shall dictate. Farewell."

What could he mean? Had he loved another? The tact and ingenuity of Lady Anna satisfactorily cleared away all clouds of suspicion, and the happy girl treasured up the parting words, already robbed of their seeming bitterness.

Lady Edgarton was alone when information reached her of the sinking of the *Arcadia*, the arrival of Mrs. Edwards and her daughter on board the sailing vessel, the husband

having been lost overboard, and the son among the missing ones, who, if saved, was not with the family, and a womanly sympathy took possession of her heart. She remembered Mrs. Edwards as she first knew her—a person of more than ordinary accomplishments, not beautiful, but, what was of far more importance, of high family connexions, yet the wife of a man much inferior to herself in rank and position, who, having squandered the property which an incensed family deigned to bestow upon her, had taken his family to a distant land, dependent upon a small legacy of his own for their support. She was now to return a widow and almost childless.

The next morning Lady Edgerton's private carriage was sent to London, where the wanderers were expected to arrive that day, and preparations were made for their hearty reception.

Sir Charles, in the mean time, had sailed for France. A few weeks in Paris had satisfied his desire for novelty there; and his restless spirit urging him forward, he soon found himself comfortably stowed away on board a small but swift sailing-vessel bound for Italy. This was the fairy-land of dreams, the blue arch of whose fadeless sky moved to poetry and song—the land of which his mother had told him, as he sat upon her knee in early childhood, and which had filled his mind in riper years with beautiful fancies. There were dark-eyed maidens there too, with winning voices tuned by love's own melody, and smiles that vied with the cloudless sky above them. There he would rest. Where his mother first beheld the light of day, where her maiden heart had been won by the noble English traveller and her pure heart's first love had been plighted, would he tear the unhallowed passion from his heart; there would he lose the memory of this island fairy, and cast her image for ever from him. It was true that he did not believe the accusation brought against her, yet she would not write to him, knowing, perhaps, as well as himself, the improper ty

of a love like theirs, deriving, as she did, her origin in part from a hated and despised race, while in his own veins coursed the purest blood of England. It was plain he could never marry her, never be aught more to her than he then was; why, then, should he think of her? He would immediately upon his return forward to Mrs. Willard funds sufficient to liquidate his whole debt of honor, write to the mission pastor, consigning her to the hands of those from whom he took her, and his whole duty in the premises would be ended. Yet should he never see her? Was the great work which his benevolence was to perform upon a native child of the woods to pass into obscurity, and his eyes never behold its result? It must be so. Yet the poetry and song of an Italian clime, the gorgeous beauty of the sky and scenery, the winning smiles of the dark-eyed maidens, could not drive the restlessness from his heart, and still he wandered on.

Months after he had left his English home he entered a small seaport town upon the coast of Germany. He was weary from a long and rough voyage, and had determined to spend a few days in this quiet spot for rest and repose. One day, while walking through an unfrequented street, he accidentally cast his eyes to an upper window of a house opposite, when he beheld a pale, haggard face which at once attracted his attention. That face was not unfamiliar to him. Somewhere, he was sure, he had met it before. All night it haunted him. Where had he seen it? Early the next morning he determined to satisfy his curiosity by inquiring at the house in question. He there learned that a young man had been sick under that roof for a number of weeks, and in a few moments afterward he was standing in the presence of Edgar Edwards.

"My poor fellow!" he exclaimed, pressing affectionately the proffered hand. "How pale and feeble you look! Tell me, I beg of you, how you came to be here in such a pitiable plight?"

"Accidents, happening everywhere," he answered, in a low voice. "I have been tossed here by shipwreck, and confined here by sickness and poverty. But it will soon be over. The doctor tells me my days are few."

He spoke hesitatingly and with broken accents; and when he had ended, his head sank listlessly upon his hand.

Edgerton's quick apprehension read much in the few silent moments which ensued. He had received a letter from his mother while in Genoa, giving an account of the wreck of the *Arcadia* and the death of Mr. Edwards, together with the loss of Edgar, of whom they could learn nothing. He, of course, was in equal ignorance of them.

Something must be done, and joyously did the restless wanderer lay hold of the work before him.

"Do you know," he inquired, "that your mother and sister arrived at Edgerton Hall safely, and are now my mother's guests?"

Edgar raised his head quickly, as Edgerton spoke, and a flush of excitement rushed to his cheeks.

"Is this true? Oh, I did not dare to ask you. I have had such a serious time—been to the coast of Africa, and returned as far as here. I knew they could never endure so much. You have made me happy indeed;" and he rose and clasped Edgerton's hand. "I almost feel that I can go to them."

"So you can. It is a mistake that your days are so few. You need rest and good, dry air for a while, and all will then be right. You shall be my companion for a time, and see if you do not recover under my care."

In a few days they exchanged the little seaport town for a home in the interior. Edgerton wrote often to his mother and Lady Eveline, telling them of his invalid companion, whom it was impossible to leave; but none knew in that distant land that that companion was the long lost Edgar Edwards.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CRUSHED FORGET-ME-NOT.

IT was a pleasant rural retreat not far from the bank of the beautiful Rhine to which Edgarton had taken the invalid. Scenery the most enchanting to the eye of Nature's true admirer lay spread out immediately before them, while just beyond, crowning the summit of a well-wooded hill, was one of those lofty ruins over which poets and artists had grown mad, and over whose faded beauties from the wreck of the past travelers wonder, while the practical adventurers scrutinizingly eye as they stumble over the immense wealth which is rapidly mouldering away, yielding no interest or profit.

While the lovers of history, the earnest searchers for those hidden links which connect our golden present with the great receding past, linger at these open portals through which fancy leads them back into the now silent labyrinth where the footprints of the great and noble of other days still remain, uneffaced by the desecrating hand of Time,—while they revel in these antiquated halls, they turn their admiring gaze to the present, in which they live, and feel their souls grow strong, as they reach out into the glowing future.

In this mood Edgarton was wont to sit for hours upon the fragment of a crumbling tower by the side of his friend, and talk to him of those scenes through which his prolific fancy was leading him. But his auditor only shrugged his shoulders with an impatient air, complained of the chilling winds, his weakness and the desolation of his soul, which always increased at this "funeral pile," as he termed it, and

with a slow, unsteady step he was led back to his little chamber and his easy-chair.

"It is of no use," he said one day, after their usual walk; "I shall not regain my health here; I am no stronger than when we came. And yet I am not sick; a weakness, a depression, holds me down."

"How would you like to go to my home, rejoin your mother and sister, and proceed to fill out the programme of your projected visit?" inquired Edgarton, soothingly.

"Go to England?"

"Yes."

"We must separate, then," replied the invalid, dropping his face upon his hands.

"No, no, Edgar; I did not mean that. I shall not leave you to go alone through a land of strangers. I only wish to aid you. You are not sick, as you just now asserted. Your system, however, is prostrated by a long series of excitements and disasters, and you need some counteracting influences brought to bear upon you. Perhaps my proposed plan would be the most effectual. That is why I mentioned it."

"True," replied the invalid, with an effort; "but the influences of which you speak could never have the desired effect. No, no; I have no wish to go to England."

Edgarton could not comprehend the reason of his objection, and both remained silent for a long time. Edgar spoke first:

"Do you believe, my friend, that my poor despised, forsaken sister has talent enough to write a book?"

Edgarton smiled:

"It does not require much talent, I believe, to write some books. But why do you ask me such a question? I know but very little about your sister; and if she has any particular or peculiar talent, you certainly ought to know it."

"Ought! We ought to have known and done many things which we did not know and do. But the reason

I asked you is that we read a work soon after we started on our voyage which must either have been written by her or by some one who knew her history."

"Perhaps," replied Edgarton, with hesitation, and the hot blood rushed to his temples—"perhaps her particular friend Flora is the author. Pshaw!" he continued, biting his lips "that could not be. What is the title of the book?"

"*'Thorny Way,'* and in it poor sister's life is most truthfully portrayed. Edgarton, a change has come over me. Life has turned away the side adorned with glittering hopes and gaudy bubbles, and now the dark, bitter reality is presented to my shrinking vision."

A shudder passed through his frame, and again he was silent. A new topic of interest had been touched upon, and Edgarton, notwithstanding the excitement of his nervous companion, had no desire to let it drop.

"Where is your sister?" he asked, after a moment's reflection.

"Earning her bread by incessant toil in a humble, obscure home," he replied.

"Is Flora with her?"

"Yes."

A sudden thought glanced through the questioner's mind, and he asked, abruptly,

"Why did they leave your father's home and subject themselves to deprivation and want?"

"On account of wrongs, Edgarton—cruel, bitter wrongs, such as could only emanate from a narrow, selfish soul;" and he arose from his chair and began to pace the floor in an excited manner.

"Be calm," said Edgarton, taking him by the arm and quietly reseating him. "If there are wrongs all around us, the consciousness that our hands assisted not in their perpetration can soothe and comfort us."

"Yes, it would, no doubt," he replied, somewhat bitterly, "but unfortunately I have no such consolation."

"Not for yourself?" asked Edgerton, in surprise.

"No; I knew too well that those letters which I carried to my artful sister never reached their destination. Edgerton, I have wronged you, and your kindness toward me now is burning my life out. Away from me! Away, I say, or my blood be upon your head!"

With a frantic gesture he broke away from the friendly arms that would have held him, and rushed from the room. From that hour the poor invalid, who had for many months been suffering from a slow nervous fever tending strongly toward lunacy, became wholly insane—"hopelessly so, indeed," according to the assertion of the physician.

Edgerton's task was now very unpleasant. He had maintained a regular correspondence with his friends at home during his absence, but for reasons wholly his own he had never disclosed the name of his companion, to whom, as he wrote, he felt great pleasure in administering in his sore need, in remembrance of the relationship which subsisted between them in former days. It was sad now to feel that his best efforts had been unavailing, and that the being whom he had striven so hard to comfort and relieve had become a pitiable wreck before his eyes. There was yet one hope, one other resource, for him. Edgar's mother and sister would in a few months return to their home in America. He could not leave him in that foreign land, away from all family attentions, to an uncertain fate. Their love and attentions might perchance call back his wandering mind. It must be done. He would undertake the perilous journey, place his friend in one of those world-famed institutions for the insane across the waters, return to England, marry Lady Eveline like a dutiful son, and commence even at this late hour a rational, sensible life.

The voyage was uncomfortable; but although it was late in the season, the elements were propitious, and in due time they reached New York in safety. Edgar had remained very calm and quiet since he had been told that he should

go back to Pleasant Cottage if he wished ; and when, at last, he reached his destination, and the carriage drove up in front of the asylum, he whispered confidentially to his companion, "At home at last," then broke forth into a long, loud peal of laughter, the first which Edgarton had heard from him for many weeks.

"I wonder if my poor sister is here?" he continued. "I shall tell her the first thing that I love her better than all the rest of the world. I hope she is looking out for me."

It was sad to see the wild, vacant stare of those blue eyes, and to listen to the low, hollow laugh that accompanied his concluding words ; and long after Edgarton had seen him comfortably situated and left him under the skillful care of the attending physician, that stare and that laugh haunted him like some dark, spectral vision from the gloomy shades of the past.

He returned to his hotel sad and dispirited. No ship was to sail for Liverpool for three weeks. How should he contrive to pass away the intervening time? The name of Flora came sounding up through his heart, but he smothered it. No, no! it would do him no good to look upon that sweet face. His resolution was fixed, and come what might, he must not swerve from it. For a long time he had not disputed with his heart touching the love it bore the beautiful Indian girl, but the absurdity of the fact had cooled its ardor and awakened within him higher and brighter aspirations.

"Yet, after all," he soliloquized, "would it not be wrong to leave the sister of poor Edgar in ignorance of his present condition, when she perhaps might be instrumental in doing him so much good? Could I not break the sad intelligence to her more gently by word of mouth than by writing? But then their homes are one." Yet why should he hesitate to see Flora? He felt fully assured by Edgar's words that she had never received his letters. How, then, could she be blamed for not answering them?

This was not to the point, but he pleaded on. Firm in his devotion to Lady Eveline, he would see Flora, converse with her gravely upon the future he proposed for her, say farewell, then leave her for ever. He grew calm, as he settled down in this purpose, and the next day found him on board a steamer ploughing rapidly up the Hudson.

It was a clear, frosty day, and there were snow-caps upon the mountains that skirted the majestic river, but the glory of the scenery had fled, and the leafless trees stretched out their bare branches in supplicating appeals to departed summer. Edgerton was not thinking of the trees, or of the snow-capped mountains, or of the beautiful river over which he was hurrying, but of her whom in a few hours he expected to meet. Would she be changed? or would she rush to greet him with the same artless freedom which was her wont when he called her his island fairy? Restless and impatient, he walks the deck for a while, then seats himself, a martyr to his overtasked patience. Albany at last is reached. Six miles more, and the steamer, true to its trust, landed safely its valuable freight.

It was late in the afternoon when Edgerton left his hotel for a visit to the seminary. Mrs. W—— received him kindly, but informed him that he was too late to see Flora that afternoon, as she had been excused by her teacher for the last hour, and had retired on account of a sick friend, as she believed. He learned her number and address, and without further inquiries sallied forth to find her.

“There must certainly be some mistake,” he thought, as he reached the house to which he had been directed. “This does not look much like a humble and obscure home.” But he hurried up the marble steps and rang the bell. His inquiry being answered in the affirmative by the waiter who responded to the summons, he was shown into a large, sumptuous parlor, where, full of wonder and amazement, he awaited the approach of Flora.

A light step was soon heard in the hall, and in another

moment the door was quickly opened, and the lovely *protégée* stood before the bewildered, fascinated visitor.

"Edgarton!" she exclaimed, impulsively, darting forward; but as suddenly checking herself, she stood pale and motionless before him.

"Flora! my beautiful fairy!" and he clasped her for one moment to his heart; then, releasing her, he gazed long into her beaming face. "How you have changed!" he said, at last, leading her to a sofa and seating himself beside her.

"The lapse of three years changes us all?" she remarked, quickly.

"Yes, externally. Have I grown old, fairy?" he asked, with assumed playfulness.

"Not in your face, that I can see."

"Nor in my heart." Ah! where was his filial devotion now? Where the love he had promised to lay at the feet of Lady Eveline? Forgotten but for a moment, when they returned to deck the idol of his heart with new beauties, new fascinations. Yet the vows must not be broken. No; he would not marry an Indian girl. "Flora, why did you not write to me?" he asked, at length, as she remained silent at his side.

"I answered all the letters I received."

"Yes; I have learned that other hands than yours received them, other eyes probably read them."

She looked at him in surprise.

"Yes, and for this reason you have often called me fickle, and vowed over and over again never to forgive me."

There were tears in the large, dark eyes of his companion, but he did not see them.

"I have very much," said Flora, "for which to thank you, and many reasons why I should forgive almost any neglect or thoughtlessness," she answered, slowly, but the voice faltered and the suppressed tears would burst forth, trembling but for a moment upon her long lashes, then falling upon her cheek.

“Flora, dear Flora, have my idle words grieved you? Forgive them. You know not the agony of my heart. In endeavoring to hide it from you I assumed a levity which I did not feel. I love you, Flora; most truthfully and fervently has that flame burned in my heart since the time we sat together upon the little rocky eminence that overlooked the quiet harbor of the island of Mackinaw.”

He had drawn her head gently upon his shoulder, and peacefully and quietly it rested there as when nearly four years ago the stars looked down and smiled upon her tranquil joy, as they beheld it peacefully, quietly, lying where it now lay.

Suddenly she arose and stood before him.

“I am a child,” she exclaimed, “weak and fickle; you the son of a noble people. Do not tempt me to utter words over which to-morrow I may weep bitter tears of repentance. Let me disclose to you hurriedly and rapidly my present position, which I owe to you, my benefactor, my friend. Nearly four years ago you left me here, an artless, confiding child, unacquainted with the world, yet pure in motive as the earnest instructions of my pious, devoted teacher had moulded me. I found the world cold and heartless, and many times cruel. The only treasure of the past which my heart contained was the little forget-me-not which you placed in its well-guarded casket at parting. Yet this withered day by day and the sunlight in the future died out, and life appeared a dark and dreary waste, from the difficult and disagreeable task of crossing which I would gladly have shrunk. Then, slowly but surely, a light, bright, all steady as the noonday sun, arose upon my vision with cheerful promises of guidance through the clouded way; and although its beams sank not deeply into my cold and desolate heart, yet the darkness fled from my path and I accepted—”

Her voice choked and the words died away upon her lips unspoken.

Edgarton took her hand tenderly and drew her to a seat again beside him. Both remained for a long time silent, busy with their own thoughts.

"Flora," he said, at length, "perhaps I did wrong to bring you away from your own people into this cold and cruel world. Would you like to return to the island?"

"It is too late," she whispered; "I am not my own. As soon as my education is finished, I am to become the wife of Lewis Fenn. He will cancel the debt I owe you, which I had made a solemn vow to pay. But I have promised, and he will pay it for me."

"Never, Flora, will I accept such a price for my fondest hopes. Tell him, for the sake of humanity, not to send me the bauble. I will trample it under my feet. Enough that he has won you from me and converted my future into a blank, dismal enough to look upon, but infinitely worse to meet face to face. He shall not add a new bitterness to his infamous work by such a proffer." Then, seeing that Flora looked wildly at him, he continued: "I must leave you. God only knows the sacrifice of heart, as I bid you farewell, never to see your beautiful face again;" and he raised it gently to his own, imprinted a long, ardent kiss upon her pale lips, then rushed from the house.

In a few hours afterward he took the night boat down the river, and early in the morning landed in New York and proceeded to his hotel.

Lura, who had come to spend the evening with Flora, entered the parlor soon after the door had closed upon Edgarton, and found her friend sitting upon the sofa, pale and motionless, where he had left her.

"Flora," she exclaimed, darting toward her, "how strangely you look! What has happened to you?"

"Oh, nothing," she replied, faintly. "I think I must have fallen asleep and dreamed."

"Or seen a ghost," replied Lura, smiling. She knew well

that Flora's distress was in some way connected with her late visitor, yet forbore to question her further.

Lura's black dress told plainly that the particulars of the sinking of the *Arcadia* were fully known to her, at least to the extent of which the public were informed. Her surprise, however, was intense when, a few days after the visitor's departure, she received a long letter from an unknown hand, telling her of the arrival of her brother in New York, his helpless and pitiable condition, and advising her as soon as convenient to visit him.

Full of suspense and sorrow she hastened to Flora with the sad intelligence. None better than she knew what hand had penned the long, sympathizing epistle.

"I shall remain with him a week longer," the writer said, in closing, "then sail for my distant home. Hopes are entertained here of his recovery, and your presence may help much to speed the happy result."

Would he, then, really leave her? And should she never see him again? Oh, how her heart upbraided her for such thoughts! He was nothing to her, nor could he ever be. Besides, she was plighted to another, whom she had told Edgerton she was to marry. But now, alone again with her secret thoughts, her once formed resolves returned to her. She would never marry: "He is too good, too noble, to be thus sacrificed. Oh, he knows not the bitterness of such a life, springing from such an ignominious source." No, no! why had her shrinking, sensitive heart been exposed to such sore trials and temptations? God alone knows how to direct, if to him she would but apply for guidance.

Mr. Fenn had for some weeks been in town, and was an almost daily visitor at the desolate home of the Lanes. His presence seemed for the time to cheer up the afflicted family, and to drive away some of the gloom which enveloped them, as the little group gathered in Mrs. Lane's

room and listened while he read or related some pleasing incident connected with his history or travels.

Flora was standing alone one evening by the window, where the family had not yet gathered, looking out into the street below, where the silent snow was rapidly falling, covering the brick walk with a fleecy carpet, and the balconies, steps and window-shutters of the dim old house opposite with its thin white covering. She was thinking, not of the falling snow or the closed house opposite her, but was listlessly dreaming, her mind floating out upon the vapory sea before her, and tossing with languid motion upon its undulating waves, veering hither and thither without a guide, aiming at no definite point, dreaming, vaguely dreaming, when a hand was laid tenderly upon her shoulder and a pair of dark, beaming eyes looked intently into her troubled face.

"Flora, my precious one, you are not well," said Mr. Fenn, pushing back her curls and gazing more earnestly into her face. "I have been watching you for many days, and can see the bloom fading from your cheeks, the languor creeping into your brilliant eyes, and can but feel that this is no place for my petted flower; she will fade and wither before giving her consent to be transplanted to a more genial clime."

He kissed her tenderly, and she laid her little white hand as a token of response upon the upturned face before her. Oh, she could not grieve his affectionate heart, so good, so noble, ever thus solicitous for her happiness. If he could only know the bitterness he was wooing to his life's cup, the blight he seemed anxious to introduce into his home-bower, he might yet be happy. But a voice seemed audibly whispering through her closed heart, "Not yet, not yet," and yielding to the impulse which swayed her for the moment, she pressed her lips affectionately to his forehead.

"Your watchful eye is quite too keen," she said, playfully; "you see I am not ill, neither do I at present experience

any symptom which I can in any way construe into the semblance of a withering process."

"Provoking girl!" he whispered, clasping her hand tightly in his own just as the door opened, and Mr. Lane entered, followed by Lura.

"This girl," said Mr. Lane, abruptly, "has been teasing me to go to New York with her next week. The most absurd idea possible!"

"I cannot see the absurdity myself; can you, Mr. Fenn?" asked Lura, pleadingly. "It is so unpleasant to think of going alone, I am so unused to traveling. Besides, it would do you good; everybody says it will."

This last remark proved an unlucky hit. What did everybody know about it? or what business had they to express an opinion upon the subject any way? He would not go; that ended it.

And it did end it, so far as he was concerned, but Mr. Fenn saw in Flora's eyes a look which prompted him to ask Miss Lura if she would accept his escort, and allow him to protect her during her anticipated visit to her brother. And he added,

"Perhaps I may be able to assist you in your good offices toward him. If so, I shall only be too happy to aid you."

Lura blushed deeply. Flora thought, "How can any one think she is not decidedly pretty?" but she hastened to the rescue.

"It will be so pleasant for you, Lura, and all your anticipated troubles will vanish with such an experienced escort."

After some deliberation and hesitation, it was finally arranged that Mr. Fenn should accompany her on the following Monday.

Well did Flora comprehend the perplexities which were before her friend. A second settlement was to be effected with her publisher, and Mr. Fenn did not yet know who was

the honored author of "Thorny Way." Another manuscript was nearly finished, which she was to submit for examination. But more than this, or the excitement of meeting her poor unfortunate brother, was the hidden love that lay buried deep in her young heart for him who was to be her constant companion during her short absence. This, however, he knew not.

But Flora did not tremble for her friend's happiness, as she would have done had she not known the strength of her firm will.

"Poor Lura!" she often murmured to herself—"poor Lura! How hard it must be to love an object beyond one's reach!" and tears started to her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE OLD LOVE AND THE NEW.

"**T**H**ERE** is a letter advertised in the morning papers for Flora Hawes," Mr. Lane quietly remarked, as he seated himself at the breakfast-table. "You had better send Jim after it; he can get it while you are taking your breakfast."

In a moment more that important functionary had bowed his assent to Flora's request, and with his invariable "Certainly," started with lengthy strides in the direction of the post-office.

"From whom can it be?" thought Flora; "certainly not from him. Oh no!"

Yet her heart would beat a little quicker, as the thought came again and again. It could not be from Mr. Fenn, for he knew the address; besides, she had received one from him last evening, and to-day the absentees were expected to return.

In the midst of her wondering the messenger returned, and placed in her hands the mysterious epistle. No, it was not from either, and she hastily broke the seal. "From Anna!" she exclaimed, with joyful surprise, as she turned to observe the signature.

Mr. Lane dropped his fork and settled himself back in his chair with a look of interest upon his face. Harry smiled and said it was "just like her to remember us," while Flora continued the perusal.

"Coming to see us—perhaps Christmas week," she remarked, calmly, as she turned the page.

Mr. Lane sighed, arose and left the room.

Flora read on.

"Well," she remarked, at last, laying it upon the table, "I do not exactly understand this matter."

"Some little feminine secret, I suppose?" remarked Harry, with a good-natured smile, as he arose to leave. "She will wonder, and perhaps make the same exclamation that you just now did, when she hears that you are not to become the Englishman's bride, but the wife of our staid bachelor friend."

He did not perceive the look of annoyance upon Flora's face, and taking up the morning paper, seated himself by the window, while she hurried away to Mrs. Lane's room.

The poor sufferer had not yet arisen, and the apartment was dark and cheerless in the extreme. Every ray of the morning sun that was shining so brightly in the street was excluded, as she was not able to endure its effect upon her sensitive nerves, and all but Flora seemed anxious to shun the gloom which surrounded her.

"Are you awake?" Flora asked, as the head moved slowly upon the pillow.

"Yes, I suppose so, notwithstanding I prayed earnestly before I slept that I might never wake again."

"Ask for patience, my dear, and see if you will not receive it. God knows best what you most need. Ask according to his will, and it shall be given you." She kissed the thin pale face cheerfully. "Just try to guess from whom I have received a letter this morning. I will read it to you if you wish to hear it."

"From some one that loves you, I suppose? I remember when I had such, but I have not now. Let the lovely, the beautiful, the adored, but become helplessly dependent upon even the one most devout worshiper, and idolatry will suddenly and most unaccountably turn to scorn and bitter contempt. Do I not know it? When in my beauty and pride I was an ornament to this establishment, did not my husband cherish and protect and, it may be, love me?"

He found me in obscurity, contending with poverty, as a humble sewing-girl, and raised me to his high position in society because I was beautiful and added to the attractions of his home. Now my power is gone, and with it his love, his kindness. Oh, Flora, you can talk of patience, pray for it, but as for me, the grave is my only refuge;" and covering her wasted face with her hand, she wept bitterly.

"Do not," Flora pleaded; "you are mistaken when you say your power over your husband is gone because you cannot adorn his home. There is one beauty with which you can yet charm him—one grace more winsome than any other which ever shone in face and figure. Shall I tell you what it is? It is a Christian character, given to us only by the Father of our spirits, who generously throws over our fading charms the adornment of purity and love which pleases every beholder and sheds around us in our everyday walk a halo of peace and the brightness of a fadeless hope. Looking through this veil of deformities of life's senseless annoying, and every bitter draught that is placed to our lips has within its liquid depths a counteracting sweet which our hearts tell us was added by a Father's love. Will you not seek it? In this little room, darkly curtained as it now is, there would then spring up a light which would dispel the gloom throughout this desolate home, and even from the heart of your disconsolate husband."

"I will try," was the whispered response; and with clasped hands fervently raised, Flora prayed for strength to crown the feeble resolve with the most happy results. The letter had been forgotten, and without another word she placed it in her pocket.

The kind offices of a nurse in this apartment she assumed morning and evening, and most faithfully did she acquit herself. Unusual care was displayed in the arrangement of all the luxuries and adornings on this occasion, for other eyes would look upon them, as the evening circle was again gathered there. The day seemed longer than usual, and

the school duties more difficult, as the excitements of the morning and the anticipations of the evening engrossed her thoughts. The week had been lonely without Lura. Was there no other emotion in her trusting heart? Did she long to hear again those affectionate words that ever guided her, to see once more those looks of love that beamed upon her when he was near? She smiled a happy, contented smile, as her heart responded, "Yes, I have been thinking all the time that you were away."

"Flora, about that letter you received this morning?" said Mrs. Lane, as she felt a hand upon her head and heard the cheerful words of greeting.

"I will get it and read it to you now," she said, turning to leave the room.

"No, no; do not leave me. Tell me its contents. It will do just as well. From whom was it?"

"Anna—our dear Anna; and she speaks of visiting us at Christmas, or perhaps not till spring. She is very happy, and her husband is the kindest and best, of course, and her home a paradise of, etc., etc. But her great object in writing is the strange part of it. It seems that in her early girlhood she had a particular friend who was unfortunate in the bestowal of her affections, and at an early age became the mother of a child. She afterward married, was again deserted and left to struggle through her short life in poverty and shame. For reasons which Anna will hereafter explain, her husband is anxious to find the child which she left, as it is positively ascertained that the mother is dead. 'You may think it very strange,' Anna goes on to say, 'but from one or two slight reasons which I cannot explain to you fully now, I am led to believe that the poor child whom you found and rescued at the expense of your home and happiness, and whom you afterward nursed with such tender care, is the same child, and the one whom we would gladly find. Will you ask her if her mother's name was not Mary Wood? We shall wait very impatiently for your answer.'

How very strange it would be," added Flora, "if she should prove to be the one!"

"It is certainly strange, and I only hope it will be so," said Mrs. Lane.

There was something in the tone of her voice that made her listener rejoice. It was not cheerfulness, but a calm quietness, a resigned sweetness, that filled Flora's anxious ear with sounds as of winning music.

There was an unusual light beaming from Lura's eyes, and a deeper expression of determined will overspread her features, that night, as the carriage stopped for a moment before Mrs. Lane's residence, that a word of greeting might be exchanged with Flora before it passed on to the seminary, where she was now a pupil and boarder. Flora's keen eye perceived this, and a feeling of pity arose in her heart, as she thought, "Oh, how she loves him!"

"I fear I am jealous," remarked Mr. Fenn, as he pressed his lips lovingly to Flora's, "for somehow I coveted the joyful greeting you bestowed upon Lura. Were you more glad to see her than me?" He was looking into her face now, and the love that shone from his dark hazel eyes penetrated her soul.

Dropping her head upon his bosom, she murmured,

"No, I am very happy to see you again."

"Precious one!" and he pressed to his heart the beautiful head that lay so trustingly above it. Seating her beside himself, he placed in her hands a package which he had brought with him.

"Permit me to open it," he said, perceiving that she hesitated. "Its external appearance does not seem very inviting."

A small ebony box inlaid with pearl was soon disclosed. Flora did not speak or move. A sudden faintness came creeping over her.

"Oh, how I have wronged him!" she mentally exclaimed.

"So noble, so good, and I so utterly unworthy of him!"

A small spring was touched, and the box lay open before her. A whole set of diamonds, together with a watch and most exquisitely wrought chain, was presented to her view.

"A present to my queen," said Mr. Fenn, bending to kiss her. "Does she not think they are very pretty? Let me try on the ring;" and he took the delicate hand in his own and placed the jewel upon her finger. "Too large! That's too bad!" and a shade of regret passed over his face.

He had not looked into Flora's face till this moment during the unpacking.

"My darling one, what distresses you?" he exclaimed, with astonishment. "Do you not admire my gift? Oh, tell me why you look so sad, so distressed?"

"You are so kind, so good, and I am so unworthy of your love," she whispered, as the tears filled her eyes. "I did not mean to deceive you. I do love you most tenderly, most truly;" and she wound her arms about his neck.

"You distress me. What do you mean by not deceiving me? Do not tear from my heart the last tie of affection or faith that binds it to your sex. I will never trust another, if you are not all purity and truth. Do not tell me that you have harbored a deceptive thought toward me—you, who would not accept my love until I knew from your own lips the stain that rested upon your history, which you had reason to suppose was unknown to me. The confidence I then reposed in you was sufficient to blot out every other consideration. Can you tell me now that you have ever deceived me? Speak, Flora! ~~Smite~~, if you will, the heart you healed and filled with a joy it never knew before, for it cannot long endure the suspense."

Tears had been falling fast from her eyes while he was speaking, but a new thought sealed the fountain for a while, and she raised her head from his shoulder with their traces only upon her cheeks.

"Oh, if you knew how well I loved you, how happy your love has ever made me, you would not, I am sure,

censure me for what I am about to tell you. Have I not heard you say you once loved another? I knew it the day we rode away from our darling Kitty's grave, and I pitied and loved you even then. Will you condemn me because I too have loved, before I knew you—one too, it may be, not half as good and noble as yourself? Yet I loved him with all the ardor of a newly-awakened heart until I supposed him false to me, when I strove to tear his image from my thoughts and to forget that I had ever known him. Then how soothing was the brotherly affection which you bestowed! More precious it became to me every day, lonely and desolate as I had become, until you offered me your love. Two weeks ago I found how little I understood myself. Charles Edgerton appeared before me in this room, and the slumbering affection I had borne him was aroused. He told me of treachery, of wrongs that had been done us, spoke of his love, which he declared was still mine, and then bade me farewell for ever—yes, for ever. I could not tell you. How could I endure the pang of losing you also? But the ring has awakened my better nature. I cannot wear it. Do not ask me."

Mr. Fenn had sunk back upon the sofa on which he was sitting, his head resting upon his hand, and with his closed eyes and lips pale and immovable. He looked the very picture of despair and wretchedness.

"Oh, please do not look so sad," she murmured, bending over him and laying her hand caressingly upon his face. "It will break my heart to see you sorrowful. What a fate is mine, that I should be obliged with my own hands to tear away the last of hope or happiness from my existence! You would have hated me if I had not told you, and in telling you I lose your love for ever." She kissed his forehead, while her tears fell hot upon his face.

"No, Flora," he answered, arousing himself—"no; you said truly I had a former love, and for this reason I forgive you. I cannot spare yours, and your plea for mine is very

sweet to me. Take this box; and when the love which your words have led me to believe has been aroused in your heart, surpassing that which you bore for me, shall again be hushed to sleep, place upon your finger the ring, and this hour shall be blotted from my memory, and Flora shall reign queen in my heart once more. Shall it be so?" He smoothed back the curls from her forehead, and awaited her reply.

"Oh, if I were not an Indian girl!" she murmured, at last. "Every one will despise me. Even now it is hissed into my ear upon every side. You cannot love one whom everybody despises, and on whose account every one will point the finger of scorn at you. How much better for you had your eyes never beheld me! How much better for me had I been permitted to live and die in the land where I was born, and among the people that would have acknowledged and loved me!"

She was calm now, and a peaceful serenity came stealing into her heart, for it was unburdened now of its heavy load. He knew all, yet he did not hate her or prepare to leave her for ever, as she had feared. There he sat, still beside her, one arm encircling her waist, one hand clasping her own. No, he would not leave her; his love was not to be withdrawn entirely from her. Yet what would she not have given to possess the power that should drive the shadow from his brow, and make him as happy as one short hour before he had been!

"Flora, you do not withdraw your promise to be mine. Much as your confession grieves me, I believe we can yet be happy, very happy, if you do not thrust my love from you. You said that Edgerton bade you farewell for ever. Pardon me if I tell you why. He is to be married in a few weeks to an English lady to whom, as my informant assured me, he has been long betrothed. Will you not forget the love you once bore him, and prove true to the vows you have plighted to me?"

Her answer in a measure brought back the joy to his eyes and dispelled the shadow that had been lingering upon his face. The ring was returned to its place in the casket, which Flora bore away to its hiding-place.

A letter was lying upon the table in Lura's room, as she entered. It was from her mother.

"My dear daughter"—thus it began—"you may be astonished at receiving this letter from me, after all that has passed, but a heart as truly maternal in its affection as mine can never forget her child, however erring. I am sorry that circumstances prevented your accompanying us in our visit, and should, notwithstanding your perverseness, have invited you to do so, had it been convenient for us to take you. We are still guests at Edgerton Hall, and have met with my brother and cousin at a dinner-party given to us, and both have extended invitations to us. Lena is quite a belle, and the only son of Cousin George, who will be very wealthy, is paying her marked attentions. I hope that she will be invited to accompany them in their tour over the Continent, which they are soon to commence. In fact, I feel very sure that she will, and have sent home for the remnant of our small fortune, which your father would not permit us to touch, although we needed it so much, that she may be furnished with the necessary wardrobe. Should she return the betrothed of George Carrington, I shall not trouble myself to go back to Pleasant Cottage, but shall order it sold and remain here, as our fortunes will be secured.

"I suppose you heard through the papers of the terrible shipwreck. Your poor father is gone, and your mother is left a lonely widow. Edgar, too, poor boy! I suppose he was never found after he floated away in the open life-boat, or we should have heard from him. It is dreadful! I presume you would like to hear from us occasionally, so I will write."

"This from my mother!" thought Lura, as she finished the heartless letter. Then her meditations centred upon

the mystery that seemed so strangely to envelop her brother. How should he be here, and they know nothing about him?

During her visit Edgar had mentioned the name of Edgarton in connection with his arrival at the asylum, and she had half determined from his incoherent expressions that it was to him also that she was indebted for the letter which gave her information of his situation. But how could this be, and they know nothing about it? Perplexed beyond measure by the mystery which she could not unravel, she determined to communicate her suspicions to Flora on the morrow, thinking that she perhaps might aid her.

Flora blushed deeply when the whole matter was laid before her, but she answered, quietly,

"I believe with you that Edgarton accompanied your brother to New York and wrote you concerning him, yet I have no positive proof. The writing, however"—and her voice sank lower—"looked familiar and awakened my suspicions when I first saw it."

So the mystery remained a mystery still, and Flora and Lura floated on till the next billow should sweep over them.

Christmas came and went. A letter from Anna reached them, postponing her visit till spring. When the first roses were in bloom upon her mother's grave, she would be there to gather them. As time passed on, true to her promise, she came. It was a lovely day, and Uncle Billy, who had not forgotten his pretty "shipmates," had just returned from his first trip to New York for the season, laden, as was his wont, with a basketful of nice dainties, which he handed in to Mrs. Lane's for both of them just as Flora came tripping up the marble steps to greet him. Turning to bid him good-bye for the third time, she saw a gentleman and lady approaching.

"My stars!" exclaimed Uncle Billy, as he caught sight of them; "that's Anna, as sure as I'm alive!"

And she, indeed, it was, leaning wearily upon the arm of her husband.

Flora bounded forward to welcome them. Uncle Billy too clasped the little extended hand tightly in his broad sunburnt palm, while he exacted a promise from Flora that Anna should have half of the bananas; "For you remember," he said, "how she used to love them." Lura was sent for, and Mr. Fenn coming in as usual, a pleasant circle was made up in Mrs. Lane's room, busily engaged in conversing upon the varied events which had transpired since their last meeting.

Two, however, sat apart from the rest, conversing in a low tone, though not less earnestly, Herbert Travers and Flora.

"I knew that you would be desirous to understand why we were so anxious to find the friendless orphan; and as none but yourself could be interested in the particulars, I thought that I would tell you as soon as possible. You remember the unfortunate young man that fell by my hand a few years ago, for which act my life would have paid the forfeit if you had not saved me? He was the father of Clara Saunders, who bore her mother's name until after her marriage with Harry Saunders, when she took that of her stepfather. I have for a long time wished to make restitution in some degree for what the world called my inhuman act, and not entirely without reason, as my conscience has often told me; so with Anna's earnest co-operation, I have determined to adopt the orphan child and be a kind and affectionate father to her. This is all which is left me to do, and with God's help, it shall be most faithfully performed."

"This is good news indeed," replied Flora, joyfully. "I have felt much anxiety for her, but with Anna's gentle training and your watchful care all will be well."

Much more was said, and many questions asked and answered, reaching far back into the past, which awakened

memories and called up scenes connected with the island that lay tranquilly sleeping on the bosom of the lake. But the approach of Mr. Fenn drove back these pleasantly awakened memories to their silent shades, and shut out their retrospective glances from old-time associations and surroundings.

"Can you admit a third person to your *tête-à-tête*?" he asked, laying his hand upon Flora's head.

"Certainly," she replied. "I want to tell you of an invitation I have just received to visit New London. Mr. Travers is to adopt my little *protégée*, as you always call her, and has invited me to come and see what a fine lady they have made of her, when she is eighteen. As she is but seven now, I shall not be under the necessity of hurrying my toilet for the journey."

In another week Clara Saunders had departed with her new friends to their Connecticut home, where others were ready to receive the lonely orphan, and to commiserate her bereaved state.

"Ah, selfish, selfish man! Where is the sympathy which God implanted in thy heart and bade thee cherish and maintain for thy soul's sake? What ruthless hand has snapped the cords that bound thy better life to this, and left the image of its Creator to float alone out upon the turbulent waves of an ever-changing sea? Conscience thunders, 'Thy hand hath done the deed!'"

Thus mused Herbert, as he folded to his manly bosom the little child who had been made fatherless by his hand. Now he was fulfilling the vow he had made to his Creator and to himself, when his prison doors were opened and the world once more lay broad and bright before him—some deed should somewhere mark his future that would shoot bright rays athwart the dark clouds that rested so heavily down upon his heart. He had been pardoned; so would he pardon, and henceforth his hand should be open and active, in deeds of love and mercy alone.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE REVELATION.

IN the suburbs of Montreal stands a large stone mansion nearly hidden from the covetous gaze of the passer by on the broad main street by the dense shade of the large old trees which stand as stern sentinels all around the extensive grounds, and by the luxuriant shrubs and flowering plants that cover the broad level lawn beneath. On either side a narrow street turns off at right angles, and from these a closer view may be had of the palatial walls, and the eye can be fed with the sight of rich, rare fruits, of arbors covered with clustering vines and of well-filled gardens skillfully arranged and carefully tended, yielding all the tempting delicacies that can be produced in that northern clime.

At the foot of the garden is a small cottage, tastefully decorated with honeysuckles and sweet brier, from which a delicious fragrance was wafted through the open window into the little square room in which upon a couch covered with purest white an aged female lay pale and still, as though the fell destroyer had been there and torn her life away. Beside her sat a young maiden with eyes dark and piercing and lips thin and tightly pressed together, while her brow, which bore marks of the restless spirit within, was shaded by heavy folds of black hair, which imparted to her somewhat of an imperious look, as she steadily gazed upon the pale face before her.

"Dora," whispered a low voice from the bed.

"I am here, mother;" and the girl arose, inclined her ear to the pallid lips and waited for her to speak.

The eyes were suddenly opened; and with their burning gaze fixed upon the bowed face so near hers, the woman exclaimed, in a smothered tone.

"I am not dead. You need not listen as though you were to hear a voice from the other world. I want you to tell Arthur to come to me. I am ready now. Go, child; I must see him. Tell him to come to me quickly."

Without a word the girl turned to depart.

"You may stay then," continued the mother, grasping her daughter's sleeve. "I shall not want you until Arthur leaves me."

Dora bowed, while the frowns rested more heavily upon her brow, as she left the house. A short time after, a middle-aged gentleman came hurrying down the garden walk, which wound among the trees, emerging here and there from the vine-covered arbors, until he stood at the cottage door, where he hesitated for a moment before entering into the presence of her in obedience to whose summons he had come. In stature he was a little below the medium height, yet well formed, and he bore about him the indisputable air of a well-bred gentleman. The jetty curls that clustered around his high, broad forehead had here and there a silver thread scattered among them, which caused the observer to take another look at the open face, upon which Time had not traced a single line to mark the flight of years. He might have been forty, yet there were many who declared that he had never seen his thirtieth birthday.

"Well, I am here, Aunt Katy," he said, advancing to the bed and taking the emaciated hand that was lying motionless upon the white counterpane. "Dora said that you had sent for me."

"Yes," she replied, turning her head feebly upon the pillow; "the time has come at last, and I release you from all the promises, the vows, the oaths, with which I have kept you bound these five long years or more. Go, claim her; she is yours."

A light of joy suddenly darted across his face, as she uttered these words, but he replied, calmly,

"Thank you, my old friend; but it grieves me to think that my great happiness must come through such a heavy trial as the loss of my dear old nurse."

"Do not scorch my departing soul with words of endearment. Yet God knows I have loved you. One temptation alone in the wide world had the power to make me false to your happiness, and that was thrust before me."

"Do not speak of the past. Life is short with you; look to the future for consolation and refuge."

She shook her head mournfully.

"Shall I send Dora to you?" he asked, as if about to leave.

"Do you not wish to know more of that dreadful secret which was locked in my heart for so many years, burning my life away?"

"Once I pleaded with you for it," he answered, firmly, "but you refused. Now you are too feeble to talk much with me, and I will be content with the great joy you have given me."

"Unlock that upper drawer with the key that lies upon the bureau, and bring me a box you will find there," she whispered, for her voice was failing.

He obeyed; and taking from her bosom a key that was hung about her neck by a faded ribbon, she bade him open the box. Beneath a pile of papers that were yellowed and soiled she found a package, and placing it in his hands, said,

"There! take it. Ten years ago I penned it with my own hand, and here in this solemn hour I reaffirm its truth. Read it when you like; but after you know all, command your heart to forgive your old friend, who loved you through all. Farewell! Remember your promise. Farewell!"

The head sank wearily upon the pillow; and after placing the box in its accustomed place, he kissed the feverish

hand of his old nurse, whom he had in childhood dearly loved, and with a whispered farewell left the cottage and hurried to call Dora to the bedside of her dying mother.

There was a marked contrast between the cot he had just left and the magnificent abode which he entered. Wealth had been lavish in its decorations, and the rich carpets, the soft velvet cushions and the heavily-carved furniture spoke of ease and elegance and filled the mind with a vague idea of comfort and repose. There were but two persons in the spacious drawing-room when Arthur Dupont entered it after his visit to Aunt Katy's cottage, an aged gentleman with an open book before him, from which he had been reading, and near him, half buried in the cushion of her easy-chair, sat a matronly female richly attired in black, her frosted locks carefully concealed beneath a cap of costly lace, which was worn a little coquettishly upon her well-shaped head and served to shade slightly her face, as it rested upon her hand, while her keen eye was fastened with a steady gaze upon the carpet.

She raised her head with a quick, nervous motion, as her son entered, and fixed upon his face an anxious look. Not at all satisfied with the result of her investigation, she said, quietly,

"I suppose Katy sent for you to attest her will?"

"Her confession, rather," was the equally calm reply.

The aged face grew pallid, and the dark eyes flashed for a moment only with the fire of excitement. But none knew better than the calm, designing woman the power of a single look, and none possessed a more accommodating mask than that which she had so dextrously worn for many years.

The face of her son, however, puzzled her. There was no anger there, no perceptible sorrow. A look of quiet happiness overspread his features.

"No, she is true; my secret is safe, let her confessions be what they may." Such was the deliberate conclusion at

which she arrived after watching her son, as he walked for a few moments leisurely up and down the apartment, when, with some casual remarks to his father, he turned to leave the room.

These were not the only inmates of that splendid mansion. There had once been a daughter, beautiful and stately as her mother ever had been, but many years before she had left the paternal roof with one whom the world called noble and true, and to whom her young heart entrusted its purest love. A fiend, however, lay concealed beneath his attractive exterior, and now and then he lifted his serpent head and with open mouth demanded yet one more draught of that liquid death upon which his vile form gloated and grew fat. It was given. Then the monster coiled his venomous length and slumbered on, but there came a day when he opened his wild, fiery eyes and reposed not again to sleep. Slowly he wound with cold, deathly coils about his victim, crushing out every laudable ambition of his human nature, rifling a noble, manly heart of every high-born affection, withering with his hot, viperous breath every moral principle, every Godlike power, with which his Creator had kindly endowed him, and scattered over the desolate waste the broken fragments of worldly hope, until at last the image of a once noble man sank overpowered down, down to degradation and a drunkard's grave, despised, lost.

But he fell not alone. Another heart was bound to this sinking wreck by ties which the cankering rust of broken vows and cold neglect could not sever; and when the husband fell, she sank beside him, a withering vine clinging to the prostrated oak which the cruel axe of intemperance spared not. God pity the hand that wielded it, for every true man turns with loathing from its presence, blood-stained as that hand ever is.

One child, a little fairy girl, survived the wreck. As Arthur Dupont restlessly passed out into the garden, and

she came tripping up the gravel walk with the sunshine all around her, singing gayly a childish song which her mother a long time before had taught her.

"Oh, Uncle Arthur, how you frightened me!" she exclaimed, tossing back her curls, as she espied him coming toward her; and running up to him, she threw her arms affectionately about his neck. "Precious uncle, now for that ride," she continued, coaxingly.

He caught her in his arms, looked in her bright, sunny face, and then, as if musing, he said, audibly, "She is more beautiful than you, my bird," and kissed her fondly.

"Thank you," she answered, with an assumed frown. "But just tell me, will you, who that beautiful creature is that you have twice had the impudence to tell me is prettier than I? She must be a visitor in your dream-land, or perhaps, you don't know that it is the opinion of one, at least, that I am superior in appearance to all fairies, or any one of that holy sisterhood that dwell in purity upon that enchanting isle of the imagination. Fie on you, uncle, to say that she is prettier than I, and never once tell me who the fair lady is, that I may pull her hair out or turn her nose askew!"

"I want no such damage committed on my imperious beauty," he replied, laughing. "But be patient and you shall see her."

"And so you are really to be married? Oh, Uncle Arthur, how I envy you! White satin dresses, veil, gloves, ribbons, everything white! And I am such an admirer of white."

"Birdie, birdie," he said, gently pulling her curls, "I am not to wear white satin dresses and that whole list of furbelows you have named. Why, then, should you envy me?"

"Then you are really to be married? Grandpapa told me a few days ago how much he wished these old walls would echo again with merry laughter, as they once did.

But she will never love you as much as I do. I wish you were not my uncle."

"What makes you think, birdie, that she will never love me as well as you do? I hope she will, a great deal better."

"Oh, I don't, for then she will eat you, and away go the blissful dreams that now haunt her pillow—I hope the quotation is correct—'of sweet companionship down the rugged hill of life.' Another quotation;" and she clapped her hands gleefully, and with a care-free laugh she bounded away.

"Sweet child!" he murmured, as he continued his walk; "the same as I remember her mother at her age. God forbid the sombre mantle of her wedded life should ever fall upon her child!"

Full of the exciting news of which she supposed herself in possession, Clara Fontafeare danced lightly into the drawing-room, not, however, without stepping upon the toes of her pet spaniel, who uttered a faint cry, then jumped about her, as if to give his mistress double assurance that he was not at all hurt.

"That's right, Fido! Let us sing and dance, making ready for our master's wedding;" and catching the sagacious animal by his extended paws, she flew with him about the room in the exuberance of her glee.

"What's that you say, Madcap?" asked the old gentleman, laying his spectacles aside upon the table and looking fondly at the spirited tableau before him.

Still she danced on.

"Speak, butterfly. Is it your master or the dog's that you were just speaking about?"

"Why, Fido's, to be sure," she answered, pushing the animal aside with an impatient gesture, declaring at the same time that she would as soon dance with a gridiron. "Didn't you know that Uncle Arthur is to bring here a being whom he has more than once declared is more beauti-

ful than your Madcap, as I believe you first called me?" and she kissed lovingly the happy wrinkled face that beamed fond love upon her.

"Did he tell you so?" asked the old lady, her countenance suddenly brightening up at the intelligence.

"Oh yes; we had a long talk about it; I am very glad, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied the grandmother, "if he doesn't the second time demean himself by stooping far below himself in station."

"Tut! tut!" said her husband, indignantly. "I am getting heartily tired of this fol-de-rol about birth and position. Let Arthur select a wife, and I shall have no doubt as to her worth; the rest may go to the dogs, for all that I care."

Arthur did not comprehend the erroneous impression which he had conveyed until after Katy's funeral, when Dora had become an inmate of the family mansion. As he was preparing to leave one day for an indefinite time, his father quietly asked,

"My son, when shall my dim eyes be brightened by a look into the face of your beautiful wife? We think it hardly fair that you do not tell us about her."

The truth flashed suddenly upon Arthur, and he replied,

"Clara has unwittingly deceived you, my dear father; I did not tell her I was to marry, though I did speak of one more beautiful even than herself. Be patient, father, and you too shall see her. Do not look so much disappointed," he added, as he looked into the clouded face of his much-loved parent. "I may marry yet; there is time enough for that these many years. At any rate, I will promise to make you glad by my perfect happiness before you leave me for ever."

The old man was comforted, said something about this being his greatest desire, and they parted.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE BROTHERS.

THE great national holiday broke upon the beautiful city of Troy with the beating of drums, the ringing of bells, the heavy booming of cannon, the incessant barking of dogs, the shouting of half-grown men, the screeching of children, the crackling of small arms and, most provoking of all, the ceaseless snapping of fire-crackers. The dust mingled with the confusion, and the scorching rays of the midsummer sun compelled all who had not in their composition a counteracting element of patriotism to remain within-doors or seek some shady retreat away from the din and bustle of the city.

Yet the nation loves and hallows this day. Perhaps it loved and hallowed it more in 1837 than in the year of grace in which we write, for many of the fathers were then still in existence whose labors had made this day significant and memorable, and the rejoicing went on.

At an early hour Mr. Fenn drove around to the residence of Mr. Lane, where Flora and Lura were ready to accompany him in a drive.

"You are not to drive those spirited horses?" asked Lura, with some trepidation, as the steeds came dashing up.

"Do you imagine my arm too weak to protect you? See how obedient they are to my every wish;" and touching them gently with the whip, they curbed their necks, distended their nostrils and gave manifest tokens of the restless spirit within them of which their owner was so proud.

"Beautiful creatures!" exclaimed Flora, as she came tripping down; and running up to them, she patted their sleek, shining coats with her hand.

"You had better take care, sir," said Jim; "I know by their looks they don't like the smell of powder."

"Neither do we," said Mr. Fenn; "that is why we are going out of it."

Soon they were dashing away at a rapid speed down the street, turning off here and there to avoid the processions that were marching according to programme through nearly every principal street in the city, until the bright green fields began to cheer their vision and the singing of birds and the fragrance of new-mown hay came wafted to them on the soft summer breeze.

"Oh, this is delightful!" exclaimed the girls, in a breath; and Flora began to sing:

"Give me a cot in the valley I love,
A tent in the greenwood, a home in the grove—"

"So say I," chimed in Lura.

"I care not how humble, for happy 'twill be,
If one faithful heart will but share it with me."

"My home, then, would suit you both," said Mr. Fenn, laughing; "and Lura must come and live with us; isn't it so, Flora?"

"Ah yes; how happy we should all be in that little cot!"

Both laughed, for the description that Mr. Fenn had given of the home to which he would bear "his queen" portrayed a palace rather than the cottage in which love always foolishly sighs to dwell, and which it as soon cries to leave.

A little hand was held captive during this conversation, for the quick eye of Mr. Fenn had espied upon one of its

fingers a diamond ring, the seal of a buried love, the pledge of renewed vows for which his heart had long been pining. There was a happy, contented smile upon his face as he looked into the beaming eyes of the beautiful girl by his side and saw the maidenly blush deepen upon her cheek, for he knew that she too was happy—happy because her love had made him so.

They had reached a pleasant little village four miles from the city; and spying a grove not far distant filled with a merry group chatting and sporting in the grateful shade, a proposition was made by Lura that they should join them. This was acceded to, but first they must drive into the village, procure some refreshments and dispose of the horses; then they would walk across the charming fields to the grove, which was but a quarter of a mile away.

All the patriotism, however, had not retired from the little village into the greenwood shades, for before they arrived at the inn one of a mischievous group of boys upon the corner deliberately threw a lighted fire-cracker at the horses' feet, which instantly exploded, and the affrighted animals reared and sprung madly forward, severing at the same time one of the reins, when they dashed with frenzied speed down the nearly deserted street. Mr. Fenn was rendered powerless to check them by the accident to the harness in their first plunge, and they therefore dashed on wholly unrestrained.

Lura uttered a faint scream, then covered her face with her hands and remained motionless and silent. Flora, with strained eyes and parted lips, pale and livid, watched the frightened horses, who like Mazeppa's steed threw from their extended jaws a white foam upon either side, while a vapor of steam arose from their reeking flanks, as with lightning-like rapidity they passed through the village and came again by the side of the smooth green fields where the clover blossoms filled the air with sweets and the birds piped their tuneful songs. Suddenly a carriage appeared

in the distance, and Flora caught the arm of her companion and uttered a cry of alarm.

"Do not fear," he said, calmly. "As soon as opportunity offers I shall rein them up to the side of the road, and by springing upon the back of one of them hope to secure our safety."

Nearer and nearer came the carriage, and on, madly on, dashed the terrified horses. A steep descent was just before them, and at its foot a broad, rapid stream crossed the road, spanned by a covered bridge. As they looked at the prospect before them, new strength was imparted to the manly arm, and with determined will Mr. Fenn abruptly and stoutly pulled the remaining rein, by which he held the flying steeds, and turned them aside from the direct course toward a high board fence that was stretched along upon either side, when, the wheel suddenly striking a decayed stump in the way, the carriage reeled, and Lura, springing from her recumbent position at sight of the newly impending danger, threw her whole weight upon the lower side of the carriage, and the three were at once thrown violently upon the ground.

The carriage which had been seen approaching now reached the brow of the hill, and a gentleman sprang hurriedly from it to the ground. Mr. Fenn had arisen and raised the insensible Flora, who was lying motionless upon his breast. The stranger darted forward as if to rescue her from the arms that encircled her, but with a sudden gesture he was restrained and bid to raise her companion.

"I fear she is badly hurt," said Mr. Fenn. "Oh, how pallid and deathly pale she looks! Can we not send for help? The village is not far distant."

"Hasten! bring a physician as speedily as possible!" was the stranger's imperative command to the driver; and with a loud snapping of the whip the carriage rolled away.

"She is not injured," he rather asserted than asked, but his face was bloodless and his white lips were tightly com-

pressed, as he took Flora's hand and laid his finger upon her feebly throbbing pulse. "Your strength is equal to mine," he added, after a slight pause. "Bear your burden down to the stream yonder, and I will follow with mine."

Mr. Fenn did not notice the agitation of his companion, but arose instantly to obey his orders.

A crowd of boys and men had followed the runaway carriage, and in a few moments some of the most untiring reached the spot, and succeeded, after a struggle, in capturing the released horses, which had passed the bridge, but on making the opposite ascent had been driven by a farmer's boy into an open lot, where they stood, panting and wellnigh exhausted, beneath the shade of a large chestnut tree.

Flora soon recovered. She had only fainted.

"Perhaps my shoulder is a little bruised," she said, a moment after, as she feebly endeavored to render some assistance to the still insensible Lura, "but it will soon be better."

A physician reached the spot in the mean time, and after a short examination a slight fracture was discovered on the back of Lura's head.

"You must hurry with her to some house," he said; "nothing can be done here."

After a short consultation, it was decided that the stranger should take charge of Flora and the insensible Lura, and accompanied by the physician should drive as rapidly as possible back to the city.

"Poor dear Lura!" said Flora, kissing again and again her cold pale face. "Why can you not restore her now?" she asked the physician, who was chafing the cold hands of his patient and looking anxiously into her face.

"She will not recover until we bleed her," was the reply, and they started on.

The village was soon passed, then the grove. In fifteen minutes the stranger said,

"We will be safely landed at Mrs. Lane's door."

Flora had not noticed the speaker before, but now she raised her eyes to his, then dropped them as suddenly, while a deep blush dyed her cheeks and temples.

She had seen him before, and there was something in the look which he always cast upon her that made her heart throb wildly and a transient happiness take possession of her.

Giving a sudden start, she exclaimed,

"My ring! Oh, I have lost my diamond ring!"

The stranger opened his hand and presented it to her.

"The sparkling attracted my attention on the ground where you had fallen, and I retained it that I might learn, if possible, how much you prized it." He smiled as he continued: "Was it because of the giver or its great value that such a sudden look of despair seized your countenance when you thought it lost?"

Flora looked at him in surprise, not anger, but her eyelids drooped, and she remained silent. In a few moments they reached their destination; and bounding from the carriage, she bade him follow her, as she hurried into the house.

In a short time Lura was moaning feebly upon her bed. The current of life indeed still flowed, but delirium was upon her brain. Old Aunt Fanny was by the bedside with her bottle of camphor, while Mrs. Skinner, the housekeeper looked moodily and sullenly on.

Poor Flora! Here was another trial; and with an aching heart, she stole away to Mrs. Lane's room to tell her of the terrible accident and its almost fatal consequences.

"I am very glad you brought her here," was the immediate reply, as she finished her story, "for I never could spare you to go elsewhere to nurse her, as I know you would. Go and send Jim for old Nurse Waters to attend her. Lura is a good girl, and she shall have every care. How kind in you, my dear Flora, to give me an opportunity

of repaying you in some slight degree for all the good you have done for me!"

Flora tenderly kissed the cheek of her friend, while a tear dropped upon her face. She ran down to the parlor for a moment, and was astonished to find the gentleman that had accompanied them still there.

"I waited to hear from your friend," he said, as she approached. "Has she recovered?"

"Only partially. I fear she is seriously injured;" and again tears trembled upon her eyelashes, and she turned away to conceal them.

"May I come every day to inquire about her?" he asked, rising and moving toward her.

"Certainly, if you wish."

And with a bow he left the room.

Soon afterward Mr. Fenn arrived, and was much grieved to hear of Lura's condition.

"You must let me help you to nurse her," he said, as Flora was about to retire to the sick-chamber. "Can I go with you? Mrs. Waters, I am sure, will be very thankful for my assistance and skill."

"Not just now," she answered. "But when she is less excited, as I hope she speedily will be, you shall have your task assigned you."

All that night Flora watched by the side of Lura, who moaned and talked incoherently, as the hours wore slowly away. The professional, Mrs. Waters, thinking it needless for more than one to lose sleep, had at an early hour stowed her portly person upon a lounge, and was quietly slumbering.

In this interval quite different scenes were transpiring at the city hall, different paths were being mapped out upon the future of more than one of the characters here grouped together which were to change the whole current of their hopes and joys.

Mr. Fenn had retired to his room at an early hour, think-

ing sadly over the adventure of the last few hours. Shortly after, a knock was heard upon the door, and on opening it, he encountered the stranger whom he had met for the first time that day. A cordial welcome was extended, for there was something in his manners which had pleased Mr. Fenn when he first beheld him. A short conversation ensued, when the stranger suddenly became thoughtful and silent.

At last, he said, abruptly,

“Your name is Lewis Fenn?”

“It is.”

“From Boston?”

“Near there, sir. But pardon me; I have never taken the trouble of informing any one here of my private affairs.”

“Do not tell me,” said the other, smiling, “that you wish to have me mind my own business, as I may, perhaps, shortly interest you.” Then, as if no interruption had occurred, he continued: “You had a sister, Clarissa Fenn, whom you used to annoy with the pet name of ‘Queenly sis’?”

“If you do not interest me, you have succeeded pretty effectually in surprising me,” said Mr. Fenn, rising to his feet. “Will you tell me who you are and how you knew my sister?”

“I will, sir; that is my business with you to-night. I am not surprised that you do not know me, for you never saw me but once, and that was upon the evening of your sister’s marriage in her humble home at Ogdensburg, your home at the time being with a rich bachelor uncle, who has given you his property, which I have heard was immense.”

“Arthur Dupont!” exclaimed Mr. Fenn, grasping the hand of the other. “Yes, it must be so! Poor, poor Clarissa!” and seating himself, he bowed his face upon his hands.

“Yes, Lewis, I was her happy husband, but my love could not save her from an early death. I wrote your parents a full account of that trying scene and her last words to them and to

me. But I love ever to repeat them: 'Dupont, you will cherish my memory, and love the little flower whose young life has taken my own. Through her let your generous affection still extend to those my childhood loved. My babe shall be a connecting link between you and heaven, and a bond to bind me still to earth.' I thought the earthly tie a feeble one, as I looked into those holy eyes that were fixed on my face with their last fond look, but these seventeen years have I lived without her, wandering up and down the world, restless and aimless. Before I returned from Europe, whither I had gone to bury my new-born grief, I heard that my beautiful babe had followed her mother. Then my selfish love folded its wings over my blighted heart and quietly slumbered, while I wandered on."

A long time the two remained silent, busy with their own retrospective glances over those long years which with both of them had been filled with much to make the present moment a painful one.

"I knew you as soon as I saw you to-day," Dupont at last quietly remarked. "A few months ago I was in the city, and heard the report that a Mr. Fenn was very attentive to the beautiful Miss Hawes; and when I saw how tenderly you clasped her insensible form to your breast, I knew that the report had been no idle talk."

Mr. Fenn raised his eyes suddenly to the face of his companion, and a look of anger for a moment passed over his features. It was not unnoticed by the other, who quietly continued:

"I am no curious idler, carelessly treading upon sacred ground merely to gratify a morbid inquisitiveness. But for your good and that of the lady whom I have no doubt you love I must continue probing. Then, if possible, I will aid in healing the wound my hand would gladly be spared from opening."

"What, in the name of all that's human, do you mean by such mysterious words? If you desire to speak of her

lineage, you may spare yourself that trouble. I know it all. Did I not love your beautiful sister as truly, as sacredly, as you loved mine? During the two weeks she spent at our humble home, before you came to bear away your bride, did she not promise to become mine—yes, mine? and my heart in its first ardent love was wild with the joy her promise created. But she returned to her home, and influences were thrown about her that drew her from me. At last a letter came—not from her, but from her mother. Oh, those cruel words! They unman me even now. Her brother—such was the strain—had exerted his influence in favor of another, and all unwittingly she had been swayed in the same direction, and his choice was then her own. She could not write to tell me this, but chose to wound me by the hand of another. Yet I still loved you for my sister's sake, and did not spurn you from my presence as you revealed yourself, although you blotted out the light from my future and drew about me the thick curtain of disappointed love. Would you repeat the cruel act? Then my sister never knew you; and God, whose professions of justice and kindness I have ever doubted since that evil hour, removed her that she might be spared the pangs of such a revelation."

Dupont's eyes had been fastened with a wild, steady look upon his companion's face, while he had been unable to make any reply to the accusations heaped upon him. But as the voice of the other ceased, and the speaker became calm in his silent grief, he exclaimed, in astonishment,

"You, Lewis Fenn, loved my sister? Yet, true as there is a God in heaven, I knew it not. I saw the roses fading upon her cheek and joy dying out from her wonted merry laugh, and they told me her heart was pining for a faithless lover. No, no, my brother. On my soul rests not the guilt of my sister's forfeited happiness and life. Yes, her life, for she died a miserable, heartbroken wife and mother. Oh, how gladly I would have given her to you! But she

thought you false. Her heart was true to the vows it had plighted even to the last. I see it all now. Oh, my mother, my mother! Would to God I had died before knowing that you had sacrificed body and soul to the vain, foolish ambition of maintaining a family aristocracy!"

There were tears in those dark eyes, usually so quiet, as he walked with rapid steps up and down the room, for a heavier grief than he had known for years lay upon his heart. He stopped at last, and stood before his companion.

"I will leave you now," he said, "if you will promise to see me again to-morrow. I have much to say to you—much that you must hear—but I cannot say it to-night. Here, however, is a package which I wish you to peruse. The knowledge which you now possess will be the only interpreter required;" and he placed in his hand the soiled papers which had been taken a few weeks before by the dying Katy's own hands from the little box.

"Good-night!" and the two brothers clasped hands fondly, while above them—who shall deny it?—two angelic forms were hovering, and in whispers sweet they echoed the fond words "Good-night!"

CHAPTER XL.

LOST, A WIFE.

LEWIS FENN sat for a long time musing over the dreams of his early love that came dancing up before him, as we have seen the rays of the setting sun dart athwart the heavy clouds, as they drew their thick folds across the place of his departure. The clock upon the church-tower not far distant told the hour of twelve. Suddenly starting, he beheld the time-stained package upon the table, and with a trembling hand he opened it and began to read.

“Strange,” he thought, as his eyes fell upon the words “My dear Arthur,” “that I should have any hesitancy in reading this confession, or whatever it may be, particularly as it interests another, and not myself.”

But he read on :

“In all probability before you read this I shall be in the grave, away from the power of temptation or threats, and beyond the reach of your displeasure. Yet the thought of death, in connection with my great sin toward you, is too dreadful for one so weak as myself to endure; and with an aching heart and a consuming fever devouring me do I now write this my confession, begging only that, for the sake of the love you bore me when your head rested fondly upon my bosom and your lispng tongue demanded each good-night kiss, you will forgive your faithless nurse, whose heart never erred toward you, but whose better judgment and whose overpowered will yielded in weakness to the tempter’s wiles.

“I hesitate in what I am to say, for in my revelation another is to be implicated for whom your noble heart

will plead, and in so doing will perhaps impose upon my memory a double condemnation. But I shall not know it, and my unburdened soul may find the rest for which it so ardently pines.

“I was born of humble parents near the residence of your mother’s father, and at an early age was often employed in the family as a nurse or companion for the younger children, or in the performance of any other light work that might be assigned me. Mabel was about my age, and an affection sprang up between us which on my part was never forgotten. We became almost companions in her home, since I shortly afterward was engaged as seamstress in the establishment. Finally the family went abroad, and I went to my father’s home to remain during their absence, it having been agreed that I should resume my place among them on their return.

“For two years the family mansion was closed, and during that time a tempter came to my lonely home with words of flattery and holy protestations of love, which in the simplicity of my heart I gathered up as honeyed dew-drops to roll them as sweet morsels under my tongue when he was away. He won my soul at last, and stamped me with undying shame.

“Mabel Graham returned from her tour of pleasure the betrothed of Augustine Dupont, and found me the mother of a child of shame; yet I clasped it to my bosom, and called it over and over again the pet names its faithless father had bestowed upon me when I lived upon his burning words of endearment, until I saw it fade and die where I had placed it, and the hot tears which my streaming eyes rained upon its cold face roused it not. Then they bore it from me, and I saw it no more.

“Pity came creeping into the heart of the proud Mabel when she saw how pale and weary of life I had become; and when she left her home to accompany her husband to his distant abode, I went with her. In less than two years

a beautiful son came to bless their wedded life; and when I felt its little head nestling upon my bosom, I called it my own, the spirit of my lost one, which God had sent back to me.

“Then my new life commenced. I was jealous when he put out his little hands to go to another who daily advanced a superior claim to my own, and the name of ‘mother,’ the first word his infant lips were taught to lisp, was given to me. This was my triumph, and well did it nurture the spirit of evil which had taken possession of me. By and by a little daughter came to divide the mother’s love, and the cherished pet was permitted to become more exclusively my own; for in my heart there lurked no affection for the little stranger, for my own child had been a son. Years rolled rapidly by.

“In a measure, I forgot my former love; and when Frank Wilmot, the handsome gardener, offered me his heart and hand, I accepted them. I was a few years his senior, yet I believe he loved me with all the ardor of his pure affection, and the passionate love which I had borne you was greatly diminished when I clasped in my maternal embrace my own child, my Dora. Soon after, you left me; and when you returned, everybody, including myself, was astonished at your approaching marriage. It was a severe blow to the proud and high-born mother, but as you remained immovable to all her entreaties, she at last, with not a very good grace, be it confessed, gave her consent. Yet when the beautiful, peerless bride came, all loved her. Who could help it? And the tears that fell upon her marble face, as it lay, so lovely still, in the open coffin, were tears of sorrow wrung from bereaved hearts.

“A little babe was sleeping in a cradle in my cottage, and Dora was playing with its silken curls as you came to bid me farewell, departing you knew not whither, as your quivering lips asserted. You left in my care the little nursling so tenderly loved for its mother’s sake; and when

I saw the teardrops glisten on the little velvet cheek after you had risen from a last embrace, I vowed to be true to the trust confided to me. You left me, and now came tidings from over the broad ocean that you were still in pursuit of some quiet place in which to bury your grief that you might return comforted.

"One beautiful spring evening, as I was sitting in the door of my cottage, looking out upon the budding trees and the green grass, upon which the moon was shining with such a holy, peaceful light that I could almost look upward and say, 'My Father,' I heard a footstep near, and looking around, saw your mother approaching me. There was a strange look upon her face, as she inquired if Frank was gone into the city, and then if Dora were sleeping; "for," said she, "I want to talk quietly with you a while with no ear but ours to listen." One look out into the pale, silvery light which spread over all around as far as the eye could reach brought the words to my lips, 'Yet God will hear,' but I did not utter them.

"'You know," she commenced, "that I have in my possession a great secret, and that if I should once divulge it it would crush your happiness for ever.' This was indeed true. Frank Wilmot knew not of my shame, and great was his indignation toward those who fell from the high position in virtue and morality which nature assigns to all. 'Of course, then,' she continued, 'if I entrust you with one, it will be as sacredly kept as yours has been by me?' I assented. 'Arthur's child,' she whispered close in my ear, 'must not remain here to eat the fruit that rightfully belongs to another.' I shuddered. 'Neither do I wish any connecting link to exist that binds us to the past, or to the family with whom my son so foolishly united himself. I have a plan. If you but aid me in carrying it out, and for ever after bury it in your bosom among the incidents of your life to be forgotten, I will not only continue true to my secret, but will bestow upon your daughter a

dowry sufficient to place her above all care, and make her future a bright and happy one. Will you give me your assistance?" I hesitated. "No violence shall be done the child. I will procure it a home where there can be no possibility of her ever returning. Will you help me?" And then, with the calm, holy moon looking down upon me, I consented—yes, I promised to betray my trust, to make more desolate the heart I would so gladly have healed of the wounds already existing there.

"Some traders were going to a distant island to barter with the Indians for their winter's store of furs. I was to go to a city upon the lake through which they were to pass; and taking with me the child and a sufficient sum of money to overcome all the conscientious scruples which they might be expected to have, and with the assurance that the babe was my own and a child of shame, I was to prevail upon them to take it as a present to some matronly squaw who would rear it as her own. The truth thus could never be brought to light; for should her future appearance indicate a different lineage, all suspicions could be readily silenced by the well-known fact that many of the itinerant traders had children among that despised people. Meantime, the parties particularly interested should learn that the failing health of the child demanded a change of air, and that it had been sent a few miles into the country, where a better diet could be obtained for her, and then that the child in a short time sickened and died.

"All went swimmingly on; and during the attendant excitement my compassion and love for the beautiful babe were swallowed up in the fear of detection. Indeed, it was not until a little coffin was brought back, with strict orders that it must not be opened, on account of the extreme heat of the season, and I saw it lowered into the grave by the side of the gentle Clarissa, and tearless eyes assumed a grief which was a mockery to the silent dead near whom our sacrilegious feet were standing, that my heart, with all its

love for you and the child, returned to me, and I wept tears more bitter, more thoroughly penitent, than had ever before dampened my cheeks.

“In violation of the strict commands of my tempter, I arranged with the trader to bring me word of the child, and from him I heard each season that Wohema, its foster-mother, cherished the little fondling with a mother’s care, and that it grew in beauty daily. Thus, my Arthur, I have told you all; and although you must condemn me as a great transgressor, yet a pleading voice in your heart will whisper, ‘She was greatly tempted.’”

The perusal was finished, and Lewis Fenn threw the manuscript upon the table and with a hurried step left the house. The stars were looking down from the azure depths upon him, but he heeded them not. Their feeble light could not penetrate the darkness that enshrouded him, and he sought not for their cheering smiles. The clock from the church-tower told the hour of two, yet he hurried on. Dark clouds were suddenly rising from behind the eastern hills, and one by one the stars went out, as they mustered in haste. Then the low, deep thunder muttered in the distance, and the vivid lightning darted athwart the gloomy sky, yet he heeded them not, as with clenched hands and eyes fixed steadily upon the ground he walked gloomily and silently on, until the rain poured in torrents upon his head and the clock proclaimed night departed, and the morn was rapidly approaching, heralded by the loud cannonading of Nature’s artillery. Then, at last, he turned homeward.

“Oh, Clarissa, Clarissa,” he exclaimed, as he threw his weary body upon the bed, “this, then, is your child! Oh, what incalculable wrongs have been done her, and how mercifully she has escaped from another, more revolting than all the rest! Will she not bless me from her spirit-home for administering to her child’s happiness? Strange that I should have clung to her, despite all the ignominy attached to her lineage! Oh, my sister, thy influence has

been thrown around me, and I knew it not. Carefully hast thou watched over the life thou didst leave on earth, and most effectually has thy angelic nature protected me. I will no more be the skeptic that circumstances for years have succeeded in making me believe myself to be. Flora was right. There *are* connecting links between earth and heaven, so ordained by a Father's love."

He fell asleep, and did not awake until aroused by a gentle knock upon the door. Arthur Dupont had come to ascertain what had become of him. The storm had passed away, and the sun was high in the heavens.

"You sleep late this morning," said his visitor. "I came to inquire if you were sick."

"Yes, I am sick, I believe, or delirious—or something. But you will tell me when it was that you ascertained that Flora Hawes was your daughter?"

"Certainly. About two years ago the writer of that manuscript was taken suddenly ill, and, as she supposed, was about to die. Sending for me, she bound me by the most solemn oaths not to reveal one word of what she was about to tell me until after her death, accompanying this with the assurance that she would then unburden her soul of a dreadful secret, which would, if unrevealed, weigh her down to darkness and despair. Never for a moment imagining what would be the nature of her confession, I vowed to her heart's content. Then she told me that my child was still alive and a pupil at the mission house on the island of Mackinaw, and bore the name of Flora Hawes. Contrary to all expectations, she recovered. I hurried away to find my child; she was not upon the island, but from the kind-hearted pastor I learned that she was here as the *protégée* of a young Englishman who had been connected with the army at that point. Hither I followed her, but, for my oath's sake, dare not reveal myself. Yet my watchful eye has been upon her; and oh how my heart has yearned to clasp her to this bosom as my own! Had I

known who the Mr. Fenn was that report assigned as her lover and betrothed husband, I should have trembled. But she is safe. A few weeks ago Katy died; and here I am to claim my child and the child of my angel wife. I tell you, sir," he continued, "my impatience required another opiate to make it remain quiet when I saw her lying so calmly on your breast and witnessed the impatient gesture with which you bade me stand aside. But my time had not come; and with something like a shudder of defiance coursing rapidly along every nerve and a slight tremor of the heart, I waited on."

"It was you, then," interrupted his listener, "who sent the piano and wrote that mysterious letter, and so forth? It is all plain now. Mysteries are not such strange things, after all. We gaze at them as when in childhood we saw huge spectres in the dark chamber where we lay upon the bed, yet could not sleep; but with a single ray of light the vision is cleared, and the grim phantom becomes no more than a dark shadow of the friendly clock, or a swaying of the curtain opposite. What a scattering of mysteries you have caused, Dupont! But I am resigned now. Flora has lost a husband who I have always been conscious could never have been the possessor of her first and purest affection, and in return has found a father whom I know she will dearly love. For my consolation I have found a friend who will never forsake me. Flora will love her uncle with the same careful interest with which she has always regarded me. This is one pearl, at least, which I have succeeded in digging out from the ruins."

"Yes, and a brother," replied his companion. "You have forgotten that you have found a brother. Do you not deem this of sufficient value to pay for the claiming?"

"I have gathered and cherished it with a truly thankful heart. Who knows better than I how to prize every newborn affection, when all die so rapidly away the instant I feel them mine?"

At an early hour Lewis Fenn repaired to Mrs. Lane's to inquire concerning Lura. Flora met him with an anxious face, pale from her nightly vigils, yet looking very lovely in her plain white morning dress.

"How proud he will be of her!" he thought, as she approached him, and tenderly he kissed her pale cheek, the ardor of his love all gone, but in its stead a lasting affection for his sister's child. Yes, there were her eyes, so large and full of soul, so dreamy in their expression, as they looked down into his, as if reading in their depths the great long-buried love which came forth as pure and holy as his sister knew it.

"Lura is no better," she replied to his inquiry; "and oh, I fear she will never be." Her voice trembled, and tears came ebbing up to her eyes.

A pang shot through the heart of the listener, and he asked, hurriedly,

"Can I not do something? It is cruel in you to deprive me of this pleasure, if anything is needed, and there must be. Let me go to her room and consult with the physician and nurse. She must be saved."

Flora looked at him steadily for a moment. Earnest solicitude was apparent in every feature; and turning away, she bade him follow her.

Lura was very pale, as she lay there motionless upon the bed, and her eyes were fixed with a wild, steady glare upon the door, as he entered. Suddenly she extended her hand toward him.

"Come, my brother," she whispered; "I was waiting for you."

Mr. Fenn approached and took the burning hand in his.

"Tell me," she continued, in a still lower tone. "You did not tell him? Oh no; I knew you would not. How he would hate me if he knew all! But he does not—oh no—and he never shall."

A look of peaceful content stole over her face, as his hand

smoothed her fevered brow, and she lay quietly upon her pillow.

"It is not all caused by the injury which she received. The physician told me so," said Mrs. Waters, in what was intended to be a whisper, but it was sufficiently loud in tone to arouse Lura, who turned her head and looked into the face beside her.

"Oh, I thought you had gone," she said, faintly. "You will stay with me, my brother?"

His reply soothed her, and she lay as quietly as before.

"It's his opinion," continued the loquacious nurse, "that she has something upon her mind. Miss Flora thinks she studies too much; but I don't know. She is very bad."

The physician corroborated her words when he came, and added,

"She seems a little better this morning. I hope to keep the fever in subjection, and it will soon spend itself. It is necessary, however, that she should be kept very quiet, and her slightest wishes gratified. The family, I understand, are predisposed to insanity, but in this case we hope to render it only a temporary affair;" and he moved about the room with a cat-like tread, answering all the inquiries proposed by Mr. Fenn and the others in a low, musical voice which seemed to hush rather than disturb his excitable patient.

Thus two weeks rolled by, and Lura was pronounced out of danger. Mr. Fenn had been received into the sick-room at least once a day during this time, for she missed him when he was away, and the presence of her brother, as she undoubtedly thought him, seemed to soothe her.

On more than one occasion had he heard his name coupled with some endearing appellation, and the truth slowly dawned upon him that he was beloved by her. As the calm summer morning closes the gloomy night into silent shades, so peacefully stole the conviction over his troubled soul.

"I shall wait no longer," said Mr. Dupont, one fine morning, as Mr. Fenn prepared to leave the hotel. "Flora's anxiety for her friend is past, and to-day she shall know that her name is Flora Dupont, and that her lineage is as high and noble as that of any lady in this city where she has so often received their scorn and taunts because they thought her an Indian girl. Ha, ha! the dark shadows that have surrounded my joys vanish before the approaching future, which I already behold glowing with the excess of pleasure which my paternal hand shall lavish upon the 'beautiful heiress.'"

Lewis Fenn smiled, wished him a speedy realization of his blissful dreams, and left the house.

CHAPTER XLI.

FOUND, A FATHER.

IT was a sultry afternoon. The leaves hung motionless upon the trees, and the shadows slept beneath them on the parched earth; the birds, with drooping wings, sat silent upon the branches, half opening their dreamy eyes, as the industrious bee, intent upon his labor, broke the stillness with his monotonous song while he robbed the luxurious flower of its honeyed sweets, and with a continuous hum of exultation flew past with his pilfered trophies back to his hive.

Mrs. Lane was reclining upon a sofa that had been wheeled out upon the balcony, and near her sat the rosy-cheeked waiting-maid, quietly fanning her. The thin lace curtains hung, undisturbed by any intruding breeze, before the open window of the chamber in which the sick one lay, while the half-closed shutters threw over the apartment a quiet shade that wooed repose and filled the mind with peaceful dreams.

Mrs. Waters felt the influence creeping over herself, and reclined upon the easy lounge, half dozing, half wondering if Mr. Fenn were really reading all those loving words from the open book which he held in his hand.

Flora had withdrawn to the parlor, and, weary and worn with her assiduous attentions to her helpless friend, had thrown herself upon a sofa, and was sleeping sweetly. The windows were closed to exclude the scorching rays of the July sun, but the door that opened into the hall was left ajar, and the street door was opened, to allure, if possible some faintly struggling breeze into the sultry mansion.

Flora, however, heeded them not, if they came; for with her dark curls pushed back from her face, one arm thrown carelessly over her head and a little unslipped foot peeping out from beneath her white dress, she slept on.

A sound as of some one approaching might have been heard at the door had any one been near to listen, for a middle-aged gentleman, richly dressed and wearing a heavy gold fob-chain, had sprung up the marble steps and halted for a moment before taking hold of the bell-knob. He was no stranger to black George, who had nearly every day since the accident answered his summons, as he came to inquire after the injured Lura. But to-day there was a deeper color upon his cheeks and a brighter light in his large dark eyes as he tripped with unusual buoyancy up the steps and paused for an instant at the open door.

His quick glance perceived at once at the farther extremity of the dimly-lighted room the outlines of a recumbent figure robed in white, and his heart unhesitatingly told him who it was. The soft velvet carpets gave back no echo to his light tread, as he approached and stood beside her. How lovely she looked! Her long dark lashes lay drooped upon a cheek where the soft rose-tints were nestling; her lips, which boasted a richer hue, were parted, as if holding sweet converse with some fairy sister in that land over which her dreams were reveling, while a smile, the precious legacy of her angel mother, was lurking about them. Oh, how his heart did plead for one paternal embrace, for one kiss upon those fresh young lips! But no; he would not wake her; and taking from his pocket a pencil and some paper, he hurriedly wrote as follows:

“DEAR FLORA: Sleep on, unconscious that beside you stands one who would gladly snatch you from your blissful dreams and press you to his throbbing heart, which has for so many years been sad and lonely without you. But I forbear. You have heard Mr. Fenn speak of his new-found

brother. Start not when you read that Arthur Dupont, who now sits beside you and impatiently writes these lines for your perusal, is also your father—not the guilty being you have always supposed him to be, for your mother was as pure and of as noble blood as my own. My precious child, at five o'clock I will return to this room, where I hope to meet you. Adieu.

“ARTHUR DUPONT.”

Having folded this, he placed it upon her pillow and stole quietly from the room.

The footsteps of Mr. Fenn, coming down the winding stairway leading from Lura's room, disturbed the fair sleeper, and she arose hurriedly, her hand falling upon the folded paper beside her. Mechanically taking it up, she perceived it was intended for her. With a hurried eagerness she devoured its contents; and with a stifled scream, she sank back upon the sofa, pale and trembling. Upon looking up, she saw Mr. Fenn coming toward her, for as he was passing the door, he noticed the paper in her hand and the wild, startled look in her eyes, and immediately divined the cause.

“Oh, Mr. Fenn,” she exclaimed, “you knew this, and did not tell me? Arthur Dupont your brother and my father!” and she threw herself wildly upon his bosom.

“Yes, Flora, and your heart is more truthfully mine in our present relation than it ever could have been had you become my wife. Is it not so, my precious one?”

Her heart did not doubt it. She had loved Mr. Fenn, as she once thought, with a sister's love, but never with that unflinching devotion which had characterized a former affection; and now, as she saw the vows she had made that were to connect her life with his for ever melt away before the revelation that other ties had clasped them in a family bond into which another and a more passionate love could never enter, she felt how little she had understood herself, and silent praise and thanksgiving arose from her trusting heart

to Him who had guided her wandering feet over the hidden path!

At the appointed hour Arthur Dupont re-entered the spacious parlor, where his child stood waiting for him. "My father!" "My daughter!" burst simultaneously from their full hearts, and his arms clasped in fond embrace his long-lost child—her whom for many years he mourned as dead, and awoke at last from this bitter dream to find beyond his reach, kept from his presence by a high barrier which he himself, unfortunately, had been compelled to erect. Now, however, it was broken down, and he was no longer a lonely wanderer over life's desert.

The shadows of evening had followed the hot, sultry day before the story had all been told, and Flora Hawes saw the dark spectre which had pertinaciously haunted her for so many years shrink away and disappear, while in its place arose in all their splendor before her, youth's bright hopes to lead her on and fill her future with golden hours.

"Lura dear," a sweet voice whispered that night, as Flora bent over her sick friend to bid her good-night, "are you not able to be made very happy?"

The deep gray eyes looked wonderingly into hers.

"Mr. Fenn loves you; and without asking me, he has my full permission to do so."

"Flora!"

"I mean it. His lips have spoken it. Yet perhaps it is not kind in me to anticipate him in this avowal. It will be just as sweet, however, in its repetition, so please hurry and get well. I have so much to tell you. Oh, Lura, God is very good to us. Can you not thank Him for His mercies?"

"Yes, Flora, I do thank Him."

From that night Lura rapidly improved. The faded roses upon her cheeks bloomed afresh, and became more brilliant than ever before. When the literary world was again astonished at the appearance of a new work, more brilliant and fascinating, even, than the popular "Thorny Way," and by

the same author, Mr. Fenn kissed the animated face, as he whispered,

"And this little genius whom the world vainly endeavors to flatter is to be my wife!"

"What a strange world!" replied Lura. "I, the poor despised 'Fury,' becoming the chosen wife of the noble, talented and much coveted Lewis Fenn! Strange, unaccountably strange!"

"Modest worth brings its own reward," said Mr. Fenn, his handsome face lighted up with inexpressible joy.

The day, long and anxiously looked for, at last arrived, when Flora was to step forth from her school-day life into the broad world, a brilliant actress on the busy stage, where an entirely different scene was opening before her from any in which she had hitherto taken an active part.

A public examination of Mrs. Willard's school was no indifferent affair, and upon this occasion every available space in the extensive apartment where spectators were admitted was fully occupied. Flora had many times appeared before them in the semi-annual examinations, but a whisper had spread abroad that the poor orphan had suddenly become a rich heiress, which was in itself sufficient to draw all eyes admiringly upon her.

She was indeed beautiful, as every one declared, when, with flushed cheeks, she stepped to the front of the stage, and with a voice clear and silvery, yet at times a little tremulous with suppressed emotion, pronounced her valedictory address, and bade her teachers and companions an affectionate farewell.

She was plainly dressed in white, as were most of her companions, notwithstanding the earnest protestations of her proud father, yet in compliance with Lura's solicitations, there were pearls gleaming among her jetty curls and clasping her plump round arms.

"I cannot outshine the brilliant authoress," she laughingly replied to her father's earnest entreaties that she

would deck herself as he wished. "We have walked too long side by side to justify me in any attempted display, and thus stepping so far from her;" and with a filial kiss burning upon his cheek, the happy father yielded entirely to her wishes.

But the time would soon come when he was to be fully gratified. There were more farewells to be spoken, many promises of reunion to be uttered, and then Arthur Dupont would bear her to his more northern home.

"Poor Mrs. Lane!" said Flora, over and over again, as she thought of the parting; "who will while away the lone hours with some favorite book, even into the long, dreary nights, when sleep refuses to come with her soothing balm? Who will accompany her in her morning drives and patiently convey to her imprisoned soul the beauties that surround them?"

She saw tears upon the still pale cheek, and the lips trembled with emotion, as the stricken one said,

"I shall be very brave, and shall yield you up as one deserving such chastenings should."

But the repeated promise that her father and herself would spend the coming winter with her would bring the color faintly back to her cheeks and the smile to her quivering lips. Lura, too, would be very lonely, but Mr. Fenn would return at the holidays, and the intermediate space was to be filled with a visit to New York.

"Then such hard and constant study as no pupil was ever before guilty of."

This was a whispered avowal to Flora's private ear, as the inconsistent Mr. Fenn would not give his consent to such close application, declaring that observations during the long travels over the Continent would prove more beneficial to her fertile mind than all the books which she could possibly devour before the next glorious spring should be upon them with all its promised blessings.

"But I am so anxious to surprise him with my Italian

and German," she continued; and so Flora promised not to divulge the secret of her determined disobedience, unless she heard through the kindness of one or more of her promised correspondents that her cheek was growing pale or that old ugly pain had returned to her head.

The golden autumn, with its rich ripe fruits, and its dreamy days, so full of quiet memories and fraught with pleasant imaginings, was near at hand, when Arthur Dupont and his beautiful daughter started on their projected journey, first stopping a few days at the Springs, then at Niagara, and at last, after visiting every point of interest on their route, to rest at Montreal, the home of her nativity, from whence, an exile, she had roamed tempest-tossed for nearly eighteen years.

There was her mother's grave. There were the scenes that that mother had loved when she came there, a happy, hopeful bride. There also was buried the faithless nurse who had brought upon herself many years of sorrow and relentings for her disobedience. Upon each could she shed many tears that would come welling up from her young heart—upon the one of sympathetic grief and Christian forgiveness, while upon the other would fall those only which spring from the purest fountain of filial love, called forth by the blessed name of "Mother." Even though we read it merely upon the cold white marble which other hands have traced in memory of those we knew not—even then it sweeps over the silvery chords of affection which vibrate through the inmost soul with a low, painful music, as the dirge-notes sound over that one form which when it is fallen, leaves in the heart a darkened, desolate chamber where no other foot can ever wander.

Flora had taken a peep beneath the sombre curtain, and wondered at beholding a face, beautiful as the hand of fancy could paint, around which her love was twining with the sacredness of a daughter's devotion. Yet there was another, ever true to the sense of duty, which had hitherto

prompted every act of Arthur Dupont toward his foolishly selfish mother; he had spoken as lightly as he could of her faults, and screened her as far as possible from the just indignation of his child. She, however, had heard enough to inspire her with secret dread of meeting her.

It was evening when they arrived in the dim old city; and after seeing Flora comfortably located in a hotel, her father left her and sought alone his home. Clara, the pretty, sprightly Clara, bounded into his arms with all the affection of her confiding nature, and asked over and over again in the same breath if she was not to see that beautiful creature for whom she had been waiting. But he pushed her gently aside, embraced his father, who received him with open arms, kissed reverently the cheek of his stately mother, then turning to Clara, as if he had that moment for the first time noticed her oft-repeated question, replied quietly, as he again and again kissed her fair young brow,

"Yes, darling, I have brought her, but you cannot see her until to-morrow, and not then, unless your grandmamma gives her full and unqualified permission."

"Oh, that she will," replied the girl, gayly. "We shall all be so happy unless you dare again to tell me, and in her presence, that she is more beautiful than your poor niece, who might have been considered rather pretty had it not been for her snub nose and yellow hair."

Her uncle laughed in spite of his mother's altered expression and her unusually pale cheek.

"Will you tell me," she inquired, "why my permission is more necessary to her presence than that of your father? I have never heard of the beauty about which Clara is so wild, excepting from her lips. If she is worthy of your love, you need not hesitate to bring her to your home, for be assured my aged eyes long to behold the happiness of my only child."

A tear trembled in her dark eye for a moment, then fell heavily upon her rich dress. Clara was commissioned to

prepare a lunch for her uncle, for, as he said, "it would taste so much better from her hand than from that of another;" and as the door closed behind her, he said, in a solemn voice,

"My mother, the happiness which you now express yourself as desirous to bestow upon your son would have been as gratefully received seventeen years ago as to-night, and it would have fallen with a more comforting effect, for this heart was lacerated then by a grief whose bitterness you never knew. Oh, how gladly would I spare you this pain which circumstances have compelled me to inflict!"

He had risen, and was walking across the room with rapid strides.

"My son," said his father, "do not agitate us unnecessarily. Whoever she may be, high or low, rich or poor, if she is your wife, our arms are open to receive her. Bring her to us that we may prove the truth of our words."

"You mistake me, dear father; I have no wife, and never shall have again, but I have a daughter, beautiful and good as she was whom I once called by that endearing name, and who in giving life to that child passed away from my sight, and now sleeps yonder in the quiet shade, while beside her is a little empty coffin in which, thank God! the delicate form of my child was never laid."

"Curse her!" exclaimed his mother, starting suddenly from her chair, and then as suddenly falling back into it again. "Yes, may her memory be cursed, and the happiness of her child blasted for ever!"

"Wife, wife!" said the old gentleman, approaching her. But she did not hear him. Her last words had been breathed through her closed lips, and now she leaned heavily against her chair, insensible to the words of consolation and forgiveness which would have been gladly poured into her ear.

They raised her gently to bear her away, when they saw

the crimson blood slowly trickling from her mouth down upon her cheek.

"I have killed her! I have killed her!" exclaimed Arthur, in despair, as he caught her in his arms and bore her to a sofa near, then rang the bell violently.

"Hasten immediately to the nearest physician," was his command to the servant who answered the summons, and he then turned to chafe the hands of his miserable mother.

"No, no, my boy," said the gray-haired sire, raising his head, as the servant closed the door; "you did not kill her. Your words were strange, and created in my heart a terrible emotion, but they were not unkind, not cruel."

Dora and the housekeeper entered with restoratives, and soon afterward the physician came, and the distressed lady was carried to her chamber. When the doctor entered, he shook his head mysteriously, avowed his belief that "the good lady" was in a very critical condition, and with the promise of a speedy return left the house.

The father and son sat long together that night, as the sad story of treachery and wrong was rehearsed for the last time.

"Never," exclaimed Arthur, "shall this dreadful tale be repeated by me again. My child is found, and this great happiness shall bury the past for ever from thought."

"You will bring her to us?" asked the father.

"Yes, to-morrow."

There was one dark and gloomy chamber in that stately mansion, as the beautiful heiress entered it, but there were hearts more dark and gloomy than this, and one there was into which no ray of hope could enter.

Clara was in ecstasies, and whispered in her uncle's ear confidentially, soon after the introduction, that she didn't care if he did say she was more beautiful than herself, for she never saw any one so superb. The kind old sire took her in his arms and blessed her. But Dora frowned

and her dark eyes gathered blackness, as the servants huddled together and talked over the merits of their new mistress.

"I can't see," said the old housekeeper, who figured as the orator upon the occasion, "how she came to be his daughter, but I think I can 'smell a rat' as far as anybody;" and she shrugged her shoulders, as if to overpower by force the great amount of knowledge which her extensive mind might be supposed to contain. "There was a mighty sight of talk about something just before I came, and I shouldn't wonder if 'twas this and nothing more."

"Oh, pish!" joined in the cook. "There is many as good as he that's had young lady daughters jumping up where they wasn't expected. I don't see what makes it so dreadful strange."

"I wish she'd stayed where she came from," said a third. "She looks too fine to say 'please' often to the likes of us."

But Dora dispelled the group by an angry gesture and an expression of wonder if they knew what they were talking about.

"Why will you not let me go to her?" asked Flora, one day, of her father, as he was talking to her of his mother. "I am sure she would grant me the permission if she knew how anxious I am to do her good. Tell her, dear father, what an experienced nurse I am, and ask her if I may not come."

"You know she must remain very quiet. Will you silence her if she attempts to talk?"

"I will be the dumbest of mutes, and compel her to follow my example."

More than a week, however, elapsed before her father bade her follow him, and in a few moments she found herself in a darkened chamber in which lay the prostrate form of her invalid grandmother.

"Flora has come to sit by you," said Arthur, bending over the bed. "Remember your promise; do not talk much with her."

Flora tenderly kissed the sunken face, as she whispered, "I know that you will be very good, so that I may stay with you."

The invalid motioned with her hand to raise the curtain, and her request was granted. One look into the beaming young face beside her, and the dark eyes closed, while a sigh came fluttering up from her burdened heart. Flora took the soft white hand in her own, and told her in low, silvery accents of her pleasant journey, and how kind and good her dear father was, and how charming it was to live in such a beautiful world, where God had surrounded us with so much to please and cheer us. At last the tea-bell rang, and the nurse told her she had better go, as the lady must be very tired.

The invalid whispered,

"No, no."

"Then I will come again?" she whispered, as she kissed the pale face.

"To-morrow."

And Flora descended to the supper-room with a happy heart.

Weeks went by, and each succeeding day found her at the bedside of her grandmother, who was slowly but surely sinking away from life.

"I have greatly wronged you, my child; do you forgive it all?" the old lady whispered, one day, as Flora was bending over her arranging the pillows.

"Forgive you? As freely as our heavenly Father forgives his poor disobedient children. Only make haste and get well, that I may prove to you how entirely the past is forgotten and how dearly I can love you."

The poor woman shook her head doubtfully.

"No, no, my child. You are young, and have not yet learned your own heart. You pity me now because you see me ill and wretched; but should I recover, this would not be mine. You could never love me—no, Flora, you could never love me. Even if you did, that would never satisfy me. My son hates me, or he is not human."

"My father hates his own mother! Oh, you do not know him as well as I do. He loves you. Perhaps he thinks you have erred, yet his love is as true and fervent as when he thought you pure. But say no more. I see the flush upon your cheek, and shall lose my reputation as nurse, besides being banished from your presence, if I permit it." She smiled cheerfully, as she said this, and kissed the upturned face fondly.

The old lady obeyed, and closed her eyes as if to sleep, but in a few moments opened them and looked beseechingly into the face beside her.

"Just a word more," she whispered. "When I am gone, and with my wasting form the pity which you now feel for me, let the thought that I loved and was always kind to both your parents awaken in your kind heart one fond remembrance of her who would never lay any claim upon your love, because she was unworthy of it. Will you, Flora? will you plant a willow over my grave, through which the winds may make sad music and the sunbeams throw a flickering retinue of lights and shadows on the cold damp sod that covers me? Do not weep. Life has been a failure with me, all its rights and privileges misjudged and misimproved. Now I am to be removed because I knew not how to use it as I ought. It is just as well. I have outlived all affection. Those that I have nurtured in my bosom sting me with hollow words of kindness."

"You must not, oh, you must not!" exclaimed Flora, starting to her feet and placing her hand upon her mouth.

But it was too late. A slight cough for a moment choked her utterance, then the deep red blood flowed from her lips.

It was ended. When night came and filled the broad lawn and beautiful garden with dark, grim, spectral forms beneath the shade of the overhanging trees and the vine-covered arbors, filling the mansion with darker shadows, Death came and hovered over them all, casting a deeper shadow over the hearts that throbbed, while one within those palatial walls became for ever still and pulseless.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE BROKEN RING.

"HAVEN'T you finished that letter yet? I have been sitting here a full hour, listening to the incessant raindrops and the nervous scratching of your pen, I can't imagine what you find to write that will be at all interesting to one who will be obliged to lay aside her stitching to read it, and the prospect of fresh bread and butter for breakfast."

And Lena Edwards threw herself languidly back upon the luxurious cushion of her velvet divan, where she had for a long time been sitting watching her mother with an impatient frown upon her face, while she penned a long, boastful and heartless letter to her absent daughter.

"I haven't any doubt," replied the mother, carelessly, as she laid aside her pen, "that she will be willing to breakfast upon coffee alone, if by no other means she could hear of the approaching wedding of Sir Charles Edgerton and the grand entertainment so soon to be given by the Lord Vivant in London palace."

"And I suppose the rivalry of the Lady Emma and myself for the honor of first clasping the soft hand of the baronet Rutherford in his favorite waltz has also been one of your choicest topics."

The mother made no reply to the saucy remark from her daughter, but quietly folded the letter which she had written, resumed her seat at the window, and looked out into the pattering rain.

"Such a day as this reminds me of Pleasant Cottage,"

she said, abruptly, without looking toward her daughter, "and I heartily wish myself back again within its quiet walls. But things are changed now. Oh, my poor boy! It would be very lonely without you;" and a tear, the first which Lena had seen for many months, rolled down the faded cheek of her once beautiful mother.

"I can't see what there ever was very pleasant about it, unless to one weary of the world and disgusted with what ladies of a certain age call the foolish pomp and show of life, or who wishes to become a recluse and retire with waning charms into the depths of solitude."

"I remember," replied the mother, with a spice of seriousness in her tone, "that you did not consider it such a dismal solitude when, like Robinson Crusoe, you could have your man Friday in the shape and person of the very eligible Lewis Fenn. I do not see why you did not secure him, and save us from all this bustle and fawning. To tell the truth, I am getting tired of it; and if Sir George does not soon offer himself to you, I shall consider that you possess no tact, and consequently have not the ability to profit by the privileges at your command.

"No doubt as much as my honored mother possessed, or she would not have married the untitled and humble E. W. Edwards, when wealth and position were in her power, forfeiting thereby both of them," was the sneering rejoinder.

Both were silent, Mrs. Edwards busying herself looking out into the gathering pools upon the lawn, and Lena resuming her book, which she had thrown down some time before with a look of evident dissatisfaction, although she had read but little.

At last she said,

"I really wish I could get that new American novel just published in London. I think some one said at the dinner table yesterday that it is by the same author as 'Thorny Way,' which I was reading on the night of the terrible shipwreck. Poor Edgar! He said it reminded him so

much of our sister. Yet I could not see why. Her heart and brain were never capable of such throes of misery or appeals to justice and mercy, even had there been any occasion for their being called forth."

The book again dropped from her hand, and a shade of deep thoughtfulness clouded her features. Could it be that the memory of those broken vows, solemnly made to Him who was able to command the winds and the waves that they should obey Him, came struggling up through her treacherous heart, so filled with morbid ambition and selfish desires, arousing for a moment her slumbering conscience to trouble and perplex her? Possibly, for her face became more and more troubled, and at last a sigh heaved her agitated bosom and moved the costly lace that partially covered it.

"These are blessed days," she exclaimed, rising to her feet, "for they succeed most gloriously in driving away *ennui* and filling the soul with goading horrors. Good-bye. I must seek Lady Anna's *boudoir* and talk over the approaching *fête*, or I shall become a maniac before my time;" and she left the room.

Darker lowered the clouds over the adjoining park, into which the tear-dimmed eyes of the unhappy mother were left to gaze with undisturbed misery, and faster fell the rain upon the drooping shrubs, and more copious was the dripping from the trees, whose branches bent lower and lower beneath the accumulating weight, as the leaves treasured up the crystal drops to shower them down upon the rural seats beneath. Rain, rain, rain! Yet Mrs. Edwards was wandering away from the gloomy scenes before her, back through the years that time had stretched out along the lengthening past. Ah, how much such a pensive wanderer can find to cheer her lonely walks if there are any flowers by the wayside to gather! Yet how often will the retiring foot be pierced by the intruding thorns which have been scattered along the path! But fruits of knowledge have

ripened along the way, and it is well for the famishing heart at times to turn and gather them.

It was raining also at Edgarton Hall, a few miles distant, bending the beautiful flowers and filling their delicate cups with the limpid drops, while the seared and withered vines upon the arbors swayed languidly to and fro in the chilling breeze.

A fire was burning briskly upon the hearth in the library, and before it sat Sir Charles, reclining listlessly in an arm-chair, with his feet comfortably elevated upon the table before him. Dinner was just over, and in no very pleasant mood he had retired thither to be alone with his own thoughts. A rap upon the door announced that he had been followed, and with an impatient gesture he rose to open it.

A pretty, bright-faced, blue-eyed girl entered, exclaiming, "Ah, you naughty cousin! You thought to steal away from me, but I have found you."

Edgarton reseated himself, and in a moment she was upon his knees.

"Tell me a story, Charles, please do," she pleaded. "Neither Aunt Annie nor mother will talk to me, they are so busy talking over your wedding and Lady Eveline's elegant *trousseau*, and I don't know what, until I am out of all patience."

"Not more so than I am, little one," he answered, smoothing her hair.

"Why, cousin, don't you like to get married and have such a nice time as Aunt Anna says you will? Yet I heard her tell mother this morning that you acted more as if you were going to be hanged."

Edgarton laughed, as he muttered something that sounded as if he had said, "Very much like it."

"You wanted a story, and have entirely forgotten what you came after in that little bit of gossip you have been communicating, silly little Floy. You should not begin to

develop your womanly nature so soon. See, there is Henry riding Prince up the gravel walk, while the rain is dripping off his mane and down his shining sides. Go, Floy, and bring me the letters, and tell Henry to make Prince a nice new bed and rub him until he is dry."

Well pleased with her important mission, the child hurried from the room with all the consequence with which in after years she would issue sterner commands. She soon returned, bringing a package, which she placed upon the table.

Edgerton looked them over carefully, and then, having selected one bearing a foreign postmark, he broke the seal. His eye glanced hurriedly over its contents, while a flush of excitement and pleasure covered his face. A short extract suffices us. It ran thus:

"Your *protégée*, Flora Hawes, proves not to be of despicable lineage, as was supposed, but the legitimate daughter of a very wealthy and much honored gentleman. She is now introduced to the world as Flora Dupont. Her betrothed, too, proves to be her own uncle, which readily accounts for the limited affection she bestowed upon him. I write this without the knowledge of either of the parties, knowing the interest which you must ever feel in one toward whom your benevolence was so generously manifested. Please do not tell my mother or sister that you have received this from me.

LURA EDWARDS."

"How strange! Why could she not have told me more? Perhaps she wished to learn if I had sufficient interest left to prompt me to inquire about her. Provoking girl! Many weeks must elapse before I can hear from her again. I might have known that there was no Indian blood in her veins. The pure rose-tints upon her cheeks plainly told this;" and he arose hurriedly and walked the floor.

"Dear cousin," said little Floy, timidly approaching him

and taking his hand, "I don't know whether you are happy or angry, your eyes look so strangely. I am sure mine don't look like yours now."

"I cannot tell you, Floy, for I do not know myself. Run down to the parlor and tell the ladies that I am busy reading my letters."

"And shall I tell them that you have one that makes your eyes shine and your cheeks as red as my pretty, pretty sister's?"

"Yes, anything—tell them what you choose;" and for the first time his pretty little cousin was gently led from the room and the door abruptly closed behind her.

A long time he stood by the window, looking out upon the fading grass, upon which the raindrops were rapidly falling; then, turning to the table, he penned a long letter, which he carefully directed, and ringing a bell, summoned Harry to his presence.

"Take this to the office before the mail leaves for London, which it will do in less than one hour. Hurry, for it contains an important message which must not fail to go immediately."

The servant bowed, yet declared, as he reached the kitchen, "that he wished that all important messages would wait for a pleasant day; he was tired of being wet through, and didn't believe there was any necessity for another soaking."

The great body of society had long been sensibly agitated by the intelligence of the approaching nuptials of Sir Charles Edgerton and Lady Eveline Pemberton, the sole surviving heirs of their once vast estates, which, through long protracted extravagance and business inactivity, had become somewhat reduced. Every one declared that their connection was a capital idea—every one excepting Sir Charles himself, who seemed to have an opinion of his own in regard to the matter. But in compliance with the promise given to his mother and the fair lady herself, prior to

his visit to Italy, he had upon his return offered his hand, which she had accepted. It was hard at times for him to think himself the very happy man that every one assured him he certainly was, for a fairy form would come to him, and a pair of dark, beaming eyes would look tenderly into his when he dreamed, and would disturb his waking hours. Lura's letter had brought the pleasing phantom into his waking reverie, driving away all other cheerful anticipations from his mind.

Eight long, anxious weeks rolled slowly away. Then came the story from Lura's own hand—Flora's abduction, the treachery of the now-deceased nurse, the restoration, her visit to Montreal, the home of her nativity, and finally her expected return to Troy for the winter. This Edgerton re-read for at least the third time before his decision was irrevocably formed.

"I marry Lady Eveline, when Flora Dupont may yet be mine!" Yet the consciousness that he had the more easily spoken his farewell upon the supposition that she was an Indian girl, troubled him. "Would she not spurn him?" He could but try; and with this new determination, he ordered his horse, and with a lighter heart than he had known for many months he rode to Pemberton Castle.

The air was clear, cold and still, while the grass and the well-pruned hedges by the roadside had a blighted appearance, as if the winter's frosty breath had blown upon them. Lady Eveline met him with the freedom and affection which were her peculiar characteristics, and he thought, as he gazed upon her beaming, happy face, that he had never seen her look so lovely. Taking her delicate hand in his, he pressed it to his lips.

"You look sad this morning," she remarked, as they walked together toward the tasty *boudoir* in which she always received him, and where together they had spent so many pleasant mornings.

"It may be so," he replied, "for the prospect of throwing

a shadow over a life which should be all sunshine oppresses me."

"Charles, my brother, my betrothed, you have come to repeat in my ear the words of an indifferent affection, to which I have before listened. Spare yourself the pain of doing so; I cannot listen to them. Foolishly I thought that the hand of one I had so long and so tenderly loved would make me happy, but it is not so. If the love which you gave into the keeping of that plebeian object some years ago is still in her possession, go and claim a return of that which she is able to give."

"Eveline, you called me brother; will you not continue to bestow upon me that endearing name?"

"Did I? Then know it shall never again pollute these lips. Go clasp to your bosom the tawny Indian maid, and bless my memory for the speedy and cheerful release which I have given you."

"Lady Eveline, you never loved me, or you could not talk so composedly of our final separation. It grieves me to think that our long-continued friendship should thus end. I love you as a sister, and would gladly have given you a dearer love had it been mine to bestow. Do not spurn me so coldly; I have not deceived you. I have never asked you to take back the pledge of our union, yet you bid me go, as one unworthy of your notice."

"Yet your acts have been a stereotyped avowal ever since our engagement that you did not love me. I knew you would some day audibly repeat it if I permitted you to do so, and I have schooled my heart accordingly. I am not a child, to weep for the loss of every toy. I have loved you, but the knowledge that a low, vulgar child of the woods supersedes myself in your affections destroys my love. Therefore you may go. Farewell!"

She turned to leave him, and Edgerton, with a fervent farewell, hurried from the house.

"A low, vulgar child of the woods!" he repeated to him-

self. He rode slowly homeward. But his thoughts were busy, and he wondered how one who had loved so deeply as he had been led to believe the lady did, whom he had just left, could so easily exchange that devotion for bitter, burning hatred.

He was alone in the library when a timid knock was heard upon the door, and little Floy came bounding in.

"So you are to return to London to-day?" he remarked, taking her in his arms. "Did you come to say good-bye?"

"Oh no; we are not going till to-morrow. Aunt Anna is so angry about something, and mamma is to stay and comfort her, I believe," she replied artlessly.

"What makes your aunt angry, little one? I think you cannot read aright. The servants no doubt have perplexed her, and she feels disturbed, not angry. That is a vulgar word, and ladies should not indulge in it."

"Yes, she is angry," persisted the little lady; "and it's at something you have done, too."

"I?"

"Yes; a servant from Pemberton Castle rode over here early this morning with a note from Lady Eveline which made Aunt Anna drive me out of the room as soon as she noticed me. I knew she was angry. But you won't care;" and she put her little arms pleadingly about his neck.

"Do you love your naughty cousin?" he asked, kissing her cheek.

"You are not naughty, and I love you because you are good."

"Then go down and tell Betty to let you help her make some cake for me, as I am very busy this morning; and after dinner Prince shall take us a long drive down to Castlebury Park."

This was sufficient to send the little intruder away with a merry heart, and Edgerton was once more alone. Well did he understand the cause of his mother's anger, and heartily did he dread to come in personal conflict with it. But it

must be encountered. He had not long to wait, for Lady Anna, full of the indignation which she could not suppress, sought the presence of her son to demand of him the reason for his inexplicable conduct.

"For the best of reasons," was his prompt reply. "I did not wish to sacrifice my life to a being I did not love, and who, as I am now fully convinced, was only prompted in her affection by a vain ambition and love of conquest."

"You wrong her and keep back the principal and only truthful reason for your perfidy. But you cannot deceive me. I will never acknowledge as a daughter the low plebeian whom you propose to make your wife. If you dare to bring her to this house, I will leave it and return to my native country to die, that I may be buried in its soil. Oh, to think that my happiness should be so suddenly turned to mortification and disappointment!" and the proud lady sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

"You anticipate, mother; I shall never intrude myself upon your presence with a wife who does not come by your maternal invitation; and as to the low plebeian to whom you have alluded, you may compose yourself, for I have very little doubt that if your honored son should ask for her hand he would be refused. I have, I confess, too many of our family foibles about superior blood and affinity to wed one of low and vulgar origin. If not, I should have been to-day probably one of the happiest men alive."

The lady raised her head and bestowed a look of approval upon her son.

"Perhaps your fair lady was too sensitive, and met you with unwarrantable indignation. I am sure you do not intend to sever your engagement."

"Yes, mother, I am free. Last evening I received from her hand the broken ring which sealed our plighted vows, and never again can the fragments be cemented. The winter will be tedious here, as I long ago determined

not to plunge into London society this season, and while you are there I propose seeking pleasure in another direction."

"You are not proposing to leave us?"

"Yes, and not to return until the unhappy affair of my foolish engagement has ceased to excite your anger and indignation toward your only son, who was at one time willing to sacrifice his dearest hopes to further your happiness. On this subject alone, my mother, have we ever seriously differed. When this barrier to our peace is removed, and you are willing to welcome me home again with open arms, then will I return to you."

She regarded his face for a moment with mingled surprise and indignation, then replied:

"Think not, Charles Edgerton, to deceive me. I know the object of your visit abroad. You think to woo the unworthy being whom you cling to with an unnatural love. This is why you leave me—I know it well—and my extended welcome to you must also embrace your wife."

"Yes," he replied, mildly. "I have not thought to deceive you, only to comfort you. If the despised *protégée*, as you are pleased to term the beautiful Flora, will be mine, I shall marry her, and you will yet be proud to call her daughter."

"Never! no, never!" she exclaimed, and left the room.

Everything was now arranged. In three weeks Edgerton would again leave his home and sail to a distant land, filled with many emotions and half-fledged hopes which he hardly dared to think might yet be developed into blissful realizations.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SMOOTH SEAS.

MRS. LANE'S dim parlor had lost its dull, sober, sombre appearance since the return of Flora Dupont and her father; the sounds of merry laughter and cheerful conversation mingled with the melody of song, and the quick, gleeful notes of the piano succeeded the low, monotonous tread and the sigh of desolation which had so often faintly stirred the stillness of the, till then, almost unfrequented rooms.

Upon Flora's departure, Lura, at the urgent request of Mrs. Lane, had left the seminary as a boarder, and taken up her abode beneath her roof, endeavoring morning and evening to fill the place, so far as in her lay, which had been just vacated by her absent friend.

"Now you can study all the time," Flora said to her upon the evening of her return, "for I shall claim my old position;" and Mrs. Lane's smiling face told plainly that the prospect before her was a happy one. Not that her love for Lura was not great, but a more earnest feeling, which had been earlier kindled into fervor for the beautiful Flora, swayed and filled her heart.

"How do you know it is I?" Flora asked, one day, as Mrs. Lane spoke her name upon her entrance into the room; "why did you not think it was Lura?"

"Because your hand always salutes me with its gentle touch. Lura's words are as tender and soothing, but her hand never presses my brow or lies with its soft, sympathizing fondness upon my head."

"Yet she does love and sympathize as truly as myself."

"Yes; but how are the blind to read the eye or the expression of the face, however much they might speak to the heart, while the ear fails to perceive in the daily tones of pity in which they are addressed those sweet notes of true love for which the imprisoned soul continually pines? Indeed, it only becomes truly sensitive to words of harshness or of chilling complaint. Flora, my darling, no one understands me so well as yourself; none can so well open the closed avenues to my heart, and let in the glad sunshine. My husband has grown kinder, and even attentive, since I have endeavored to come out from my great sorrow and help him to brush away the clouds that brooded over him. But he knows not the power that lies hidden in every tiny flower, or is wafted to us on every fragrant breeze that comes and nestles in our flowing locks when the day is over, or looks down upon us in the soft rays of the twinkling stars gleaming from their ethereal homes. All these seek no intercourse with the great, bustling, tangible world, but they penetrate our external, decaying natures, communing with the internal organization of that life which animates angelic forms, filling the spiritual existence with adoration for the glories which surround them. To nurture a healthy existence, the blind need in a great degree a different sustenance from the calculated loss and gain of every-day life; and oh, how very few understand the art of administering it! Too often, for this reason, the mind contracts and starves in its prison-house, while the world looks on and calls us morbid and imbecile."

"Not so bad as that," replied Flora, kissing the animated face. "We only fail to understand because we are inexperienced, but we do not impute blame. Oh no! God forbid that I should censure one of his afflicted."

"Not you! How lonely I shall be when you are not here to surprise me with the last new book, or to wheel my chair unsolicited to the open window, where the cool breeze can fan my brow, and talk to me of the glorious sunset before

me, while for the time I forget that my eyes are not beholding it, as the picture glows and changes before my mental vision! How I shall miss from my hand the fresh bouquet, with its alluring dewdrops still glistening among its golden petals! Oh yes; I shall indeed miss you, for they will tell me these can do me no good, and that they may perhaps even distress me, because my natural vision cannot behold them. Yet they think they supply my wants when they feed and clothe my body bountifully and luxuriously. This is good, so far as it goes. I once heard of a bird which pined and died because it was removed from a golden cage to another composed of common steel bars. We like to have our prison-house adorned, but how much more keenly do we appreciate the kindness of those who cheer the lonely, dreary occupant!"

"You are sad to-day, my dear friend," said Flora, the tears trembling in her large dark eyes. "God knows what we all need, and in due time we shall receive our heart's desire; shall we not?"

"Oh yes; but my struggling faith cannot perceive anywhere in the clouded future another Flora to scatter sunbeams through the darkness which will surround me."

"Then look upward. Is there not an angel form that will hover over you, whose effulgent robes shall reflect their tranquil brightness through the shut windows of your imprisoned soul, filling your maternal heart with the blissful foretaste of a happy reunion and a glorious freedom, when the winged soul shall soar in its natural element of purity and repose?"

"Oh yes; I believe it. God will provide. I thank you. Flora, one of my heaviest losses when you are gone will be the deprivation of those sweet corrections which you have so often, to my lasting benefit, administered. Ah! it will be hard work to overcome my proud, faithless spirit alone, and with conflicting circumstances all around me."

The door opened here, and a servant announced Uncle Billy as waiting in the parlor to see Miss Flora.

"Dear, good Uncle Billy!" she exclaimed, kissing again the flushed cheek of her much-loved friend; "I must go to see him."

"This is kind in you," she said, entering the parlor and extending both of her hands. "I might have known that you never would forget your old friends."

The kind-hearted old man held the delicate little hands tightly in his own for a moment, while he peered beneath his broad, shaggy eyebrows down into the sparkling face before him.

"Well, now!" he exclaimed, at last; "I don't see as you look any more stuck up than you did when you used to go round sweeping and singing in the old brown house over yonder. And yet they tell me you have grown to be a mighty fine lady since I saw you last summer."

"I have the same heart that I had when I was a poor Indian girl. There is no change, I can assure you, unless it be that I love those dear friends whom I then loved with redoubled fervor. Isn't it so, my dear father?" she asked, as she saw him approaching. "This is Uncle Billy, of whom you have heard me speak, and he seems to think it strange that I should continue to love him, now that I am no longer an Indian girl."

She laughed merrily, and Mr. Dupont, advancing, clasped the extended hand of the old sailor with unmistakable warmth.

"Not at all strange," said her father. "A true heart does not put its old affections aside at every sprinkling of prosperity. She is no leech, that a slight sprinkling of salt can force to disgorge all that it once absorbed with eager avidity. No, no! My daughter will ever remember you with the most kindly affection, as will also her father, for the kindness shown by you to her in her loneliness."

"Well, well," exclaimed Uncle Billy, drawing his shaggy

eyebrows down over the little gray eyes, which looked unusually moist, as they disappeared, "I ain't nothing and haven't done nothing to deserve anybody's love; and yet I did want to see our girls once more before the *Lady Ann* took up her winter quarters again in New York Harbor. You see, I don't like to stay at home since they all left me, so I sold the old house, and live with a shipmate down there."

Miss Goodale was here announced. With an exclamation of pleasure, Flora darted forward to welcome her old friend, but stopped short in surprise, as she saw Miss Kate, the elder of the two sisters, standing before her. She was very richly dressed, and a smile of friendly recognition was upon her pretty face.

"Miss Goodale, I believe?" said Flora, in friendly greeting. "We have met before, but not as acquaintances," she continued, leading her to a seat.

Flora Dupont was not saintly in her nature, and she looked upon the simpering, affected lady with a feeling very much akin to disgust. If she remembered all the little acts of kindness and affection that had been manifested toward her in those chilling days of dependence and neglect, she found it equally impossible to forget the thrusts of scorn and contempt which had so often pierced her sensitive heart and left it bleeding and quivering, to be healed by the hand of time alone.

"Well, Miss Flora, I expect you have seen me as long as you want to," said Uncle Billy, rising to depart. "But I want you to take that basket of peaches; they are the last of the season, and I expect they may be the last I can ever bring you."

This was too much for the old man, and the big tears that had been gathering in those deep-set eyes rolled down his weatherbeaten cheeks.

"No, no!" said Flora, going toward him; "I cannot spare you yet. Poor Lura! You would not go away without see

ing her? I am sure she will want to tell you something, and perhaps send something by you to her brother."

Thus importuned, he permitted her to lead him to the other extremity of the spacious room, where he was soon rejoined by Mr. Dupont, who had just then returned to the parlor, and in a short time the two were chatting pleasantly together.

Flora could not but perceive that somewhat of the old, well-remembered looks had returned to her lady visitor's face, as she again seated herself by her side; and with a smile, she answered the look by saying,

"That is one of my dear old friends whose love has been more precious to me than riches, because it was bestowed when the heart knew how to appreciate the gift and feel its inestimable worth. Oh, if we could only see the golden chalice in every lonely heart in which it treasures each kindly word and gentle act, that they may be there preserved through all future years, such words and acts would not be so sparingly given or so grudgingly bestowed."

She did not intend to utter all this; but carried along by her impulsive heart, she had breathed its language thoughtlessly, and she now raised her eyes with a regretful look, fearing that her visitor might have thought that her words were intentionally personal, which would have been extremely unladylike, under the circumstances. She was mistaken, however, or the lady of the world had sufficient command over her expressionless features to avoid showing any disturbed feelings, since she chatted on as glibly as before. It would be no slight honor, by way of requital for her present pains, to be a friend of the beautiful heiress during the coming season of pleasure-giving and pleasure-taking; and Kate Goodale had consequently determined, notwithstanding her sister's jeering admonition, to omit no trouble or care that she might elevate herself to that enviable position. It was, therefore, with considerable annoyance that she was conscious that the allotted time for "a genteel call"

had passed while the charming heiress still looked as unappreciating at these great honors bestowed upon her by her visit as when she first entered. She arose, however, with becoming dignity and grace; and with a slight pressure of the hand and a warm adieu, she left the house.

Many of her former schoolmates who had passed her coldly in the hall or gazed from the opposite side of the recitation-room at her faded dress with a sneering look had found since her return to T—— many fond remembrances in their school-day life, which they delighted to talk over with Miss Dupont, in Mrs. Lane's elegant parlor, and Flora, like a true Christian, had endeavored to draw a curtain between the present and the past, and to smile and be as happy as though the past had not been. But who will not excuse and forgive the little rustling breeze of concealed indignation which would at times come and blow the thin folds aside for human nature to peep through?

The evenings were delightful. There was no sad intrusion there, as the family all gathered together—not in the little upper chamber, where one year ago the circle nightly convened, but in the parlor, where there could be music and little *tête-à-têtes* without annoying auditors. Mrs. Lane, with her quiet, happy face and large, full, sightless eyes, never failed to be one of the party. Mr. Lane, too, had thrown aside somewhat of his moroseness and acidity, and would sit with Mr. Dupont, quietly talking over his failing business and his incapacities until they vanished from before his eyes and he became again, in a measure, the popular merchant of former days. Harry, poor fellow! had thrown a pyramid of fragrant flowers upon his former love, and had left it there buried to silent repose, while he vainly tried, by every kind attention and gallant act, to win to his bereaved heart a new object for its especial adoration.

Flora saw and understood all, yet endeavored in as kindly a manner as possible to tell him how highly she

regarded him as the lover of her dear Kitty, and that she should ever remember him as a friend to be cherished and admired for her sweet sake.

"It is well," he said, one evening, as she told this. "I have no right to worship at another's shrine. Yet life is cold and dreary when our love has no warmer resting-place than the damp, chill grave."

Flora pitied him. Her looks must have manifested her feelings, for he caught her hand and pressed it fervently to his lips.

Upon one of these evenings, while all was bright and cheerful within, the winds outside were sighing and sobbing for entrance at the closed casements, or whispering sad, low prophecies through the leafless trees, or rustling and piling up their faded garments upon the ground at their feet, while the restless clouds darted hither and thither among the stars, hiding for a time their faint glimmerings from the street pedestrian, who drew his cloak more closely about him and bent his head to the threatening storm, as he hurried to his home. All prophesied snow before many hours, and not a few smiled a cheerful welcome to the new visitor, whose coming had been unusually late, for winter looks cheerless and uninviting without his glittering mantle and long white beard.

It was upon such a night that Flora sat at the piano singing her sweetest notes, to the delight of her loving father, who stood by her side, and of Mrs. Lane, who sat near with her easy-chair turned from the brilliant light near which Lura sat with her books open before her, while Harry and Mr. Lane looked happily on, that a servant opened the door, and approaching, handed Flora a card. She arose, as her eye fell upon the name, and a sudden pallor overspread her features, which did not escape the watchful eye of her father.

"Flora," he said, mildly, "will you let me see that card?"

"Oh yes. Charles Edgerton is at the City Hotel, and requests the privilege of calling to-morrow at nine o'clock."

Arthur Dupont did not turn his steady gaze for one moment from the face of his daughter, as she said this, and a deep sigh heaved his bosom, as he asked,

"Will you grant this request, darling?"

"He has been a very dear friend."

"While you plead with those eloquent eyes, my jewel, I can never touch a discordant note in your heart. Do as it prompts you."

She cast a look of sweet devotion upon the speaker, then, turning to the table, took from the case a card, and wrote as follows: "Flora Dupont is happy at all times to see her friends;" and enclosing it in an envelope, she handed it to the servant waiting in the hall.

The sudden appearance of Sir Charles, particularly at this season of the year, gave rise to much wonder and conjecture. Lura's steady gaze was fixed meanwhile upon the page before her, while her eyes sparkled and danced with an unwonted brilliancy and her cheeks glowed from suppressed joy. She knew well the love which existed between those two hearts, and none knew better than herself who had drawn the magic cord which she was sure would at last unite them.

"You are very happy at the prospect of meeting your cousin," said Flora, bending over her and kissing her flushed cheek. "I never saw you look so pretty and animated."

"Other eyes are brilliant and other cheeks rosy besides mine, and another little heart throbs with a concealed joy, if I am not greatly mistaken," was the laughing reply. "But I ought to be very angry. Why did he not send his card to me, who have some claim upon his heart's affection? or why did he not waive all ceremony and rush to my embrace? Instead of this, he passes by the little

diminutive 'Fury' of other days for the beautiful Flora Dupont, the idol of all eyes. Heigho!"

The bitterness which a few months before would have rendered these words obnoxious was not there now, for her heart had been cleansed by its own happiness, and her own great joy had sweetened the acid fountain.

The next morning a blanket of snow had been thrown over Nature's faded form, and the chilling frost had penetrated her pulseless bosom and stiffened her inactive nerves, but no icy coldness had settled upon the heart of Flora, as the great clock upon the tower of St. John's told the hour of nine and she knew that Edgarton was near her.

How should she meet him? Was he betrothed, perhaps even then wedded, to another? Yet he had desired to see her, and the twofold sadness that had overshadowed her heart at their last meeting was cleared away, and she could see him and thank him for all his former kindness, and then say "Farewell," feeling that they were friends, because they were equals.

The door opened, then as suddenly closed; and stopping short in her needlework, she turned, to find herself alone in the presence of her expected visitor. For a moment neither spoke; but their eyes met, and the secret of each heart was disclosed in the mutually earnest, wistful gaze.

Edgarton did not approach her, but seating himself upon a sofa, asked if she would sit beside him:

"I will not yield to the pleadings of my yearning heart—no, not even to take that extended hand in mine own—until I have told you all. From our first acquaintance on that lonely distant isle I have loved you more devotedly than my own heart fully comprehended. It was a secret, yet, I confess, firm, resolution of mine to educate and then win you to myself. Our first parting, however, wrung from my heart an avowal, and I knew that in your pure affection my little forget-me-not was cherished with a jealous care. This

was bliss to me, and for a long time the consciousness of it was sufficiently powerful to turn me from every temptation to tear it from its resting-place or to permit it to wither and die from cold neglect. I wrote you often, but other hands than yours received the letters. I told you my love, but other eyes gloated over my repeated avowals. Then came secret missives to my distant home, telling of your proffered affection for one I knew you never loved, of follies, of crimes, of which my heart assured me you were incapable. They reached me only through another, and that channel was poisoned by these false reports. Months afterward I learned that the secret of your supposed lineage was also known to my mother. After leaving the country to drown my chagrin, and to free myself from the importunities of my mother to carry out her long-cherished plan of connecting our wavering fortunes with those of Pemberton Castle, I returned, having first seen you and learned that you were soon to wed another, and offered my hand to Lady Eveline, assuring her at the same time that my first and purest love was in the possession of another.

“Three months ago I heard of your change of fortune, and that the one to whom your vows were plighted had proven to be your own uncle. This aroused my love, which was only chained, not subdued, and I hastened to my betrothed to tell her all, but she would not hear, and in a moment of anger bade me go. I was free, and here I am before you—not as a suppliant for that love which I have forfeited, but to plead for that forgiveness for which my heart is pining. I thought that you were an Indian girl, and for this reason I sought to crush the love which your image had created, and to fill the second place with an object for which I had but little affection. You have been true, I have been false, to our first pledge of love. Can you forgive?”

Flora had been listening with downcast eyes, but she raised them now, and the pleading look which met hers

melted her heart; and with an impulsive movement, she extended her arms and was clasped in one long, fervent embrace to the throbbing heart of him whom she had so long adored.

"Forgiven and loved; am I, fairy?"

"Forgiven, and the fallen idol reinstated," she murmured. "I never blamed you," she said, a few moments after; "therefore there was nothing for me to pardon. Had I known myself to be what I really was, I could never have given myself to the bold and handsome Wehegan."

"You never loved him, fairy?"

"No; it was you whom I loved, and to make you happy by saving your friend I made that terrible promise the thought of which even now makes me shudder."

Arthur Dupont yielded a reluctant consent to the union of his daughter with the noble young Englishman.

A delightful winter was before the newly betrothed; and according to promise, a few days before Christmas Mr. Fenn returned to join the happy circle. Lura's educational toil ended with the holidays, and the ensuing two or three weeks were to be spent by the whole party in New York. A visit to her unhappy brother, who was slowly but surely recovering, was not, be it confessed, the most engrossing object upon which her thoughts rested prior to the expected trip. A *trousseau*, elegant as befitted one in the station she expected to fill, was to be selected, together with the necessary wardrobe for a journey of many months; for when the joyous spring should come again to deck reanimating Nature with her early gems, she was to become the wife of Lewis Fenn, and the happy pair, accompanied by Arthur Dupont and his daughter, would set out on a tour through Europe.

Edgarton returned home a few weeks in advance, with the promise of joining the party immediately upon their arrival in London. Lady Anna received her son with open arms when she learned from his lips that he had now no plebeian bride, and Lady Eveline was not mentioned.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CURRENTS AND COUNTER CURRENTS.

"I SUPPOSE you saw your Indian *protégée*?" carelessly inquired Lady Anna while conversing with her son a few days after his return. "You have not spoken to me about her, but you see I am somewhat interested, nevertheless."

"I did not suppose you cared to hear me talk about her. Yes, I saw her."

"Her school-days being over, I trust you made provision for her speedy return to her people? This certainly was due her, as you were the sole cause of her leaving them."

The color deepened a little upon the cheek and brow of the young man; and had the questioner raised her eyes for a moment from the needlework which she was holding in her hands, she might have noticed an unusual brightness in the orbs opposite, ordinarily calm, that were fixed so intently upon her placid features, and a strange significant smile playing about his handsome mouth. But she did not, and after a moment's pause he answered, as quietly as he had been questioned:

"I had not that privilege, dear mother. Another had preceded me, and she has returned with her heart full of gladness to her people—to those who will cherish and love her."

The mother started, and a flash of pleasurable surprise shot athwart her face and neck.

"This is good news indeed, my son, for I feared much that your impulsive nature might influence her in taking a

wrong step in life—I mean drawing her aside from the only path in which she can ever become useful and happy. Yes, Charles, happy, for a young girl, beautiful and fascinating though she may be, who has in her veins the dark blood of a despised people, must ever be an outcast from polished society and a stranger among us, while our deep-rooted prejudice against inferiorities of blood and affinity are permitted to survive.”

The speaker's voice had become modulated to a tone of soothing calmness quite foreign to her Italian nature, while the light brightened and glowed in the blue eyes opposite and a smile danced in nervous glee around the lips of the listener. Charles Edgerton, like his fair betrothed, was not perfect, and an anticipated blissful triumph filled his heart, all human nature as it was, with a keen relish for certain slow but sure developments.

“Now that this silly affair is well over,” continued the lady, after a prolonged silence, which she had vainly hoped would be broken by her son, “why not endeavor to win back Lady Eveline? I feel quite sure she would be quite happy to receive you, and no doubt is as fully convinced of the folly attending her girlish freak of jealous pettishness as yourself. In fact, she has often told me as much; and at one time, while mourning your absence—”

“Pardon me, dear mother, but I feel that I have no right to listen to a part of a private *tête-à-tête* with one who can never be aught else to me than what she now is, unless it be a little dearer friend, for she is angry with me now, and thinks me unjust and selfish, while I can array no such manifestations of cruelty before the tribunal of conscience. No, mother; let me beg of you to become perfectly easy upon this one point. Much as I should rejoice to please and gratify my only parent, I will not humble myself before an object for whom I have no love, and who can never bestow upon my passing life more than a stinted affection. Do not plead her cause, dear mother,” he continued, seeing

she was about to speak. "At one time she might have believed that the tie which bound us was that pure devotion which often links young hearts together; but when its strength was tested, it was found too brittle, and a sudden jar snapped it asunder. It was education that united those spurious links, and no power of mine shall ever reconnect the severed chain." The speaker arose, as he finished these words, and walking toward the door, said, carelessly, "I think I will ride over to town to-morrow, and spend a few days. Little Fløy, I am sure, is anxious to see me," and then left the room.

The truth is, a grand surprise had been maturing in his fruitful brain for many weeks, and it was full time that he was acting upon it. Besides, there must be letters awaiting him; and Lady Anna was too much overcome with surprise and disappointment to urge his stay.

Nor was he mistaken in his expectations. "In three weeks," so ran the welcome missive, "the little party, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Fenn, Mr. Dupont and his daughter, with Nenie, her French dressing-maid, will arrive in Liverpool by the *Europa*," and the pleasing anticipation awoke within the breast of the reader new and strange emotions. Not that he doubted the sequel of his proud mother's antipathy toward one whom she had never seen, but of whom she had heard so much, but how should she meet her? How should he first present his beautiful betrothed, and suppress the unmanly triumph which he knew would arise in his heart, and which, be it confessed, he had no permanent desire to exclude from his future conquest? There was one, and only one, in whom he could implicitly confide, and from whom he could expect to receive salutary advice and assistance.

This was no newly-devised scheme; and when he had seated himself in his carriage, with the command to drive to Burleigh House, he settled himself back upon the soft cushions with the air of one whose greatest ambition in life

had been just attained, and to whom all that now remained was but to talk, eat and enjoy the fruits of a well-earned success.

It was a fine old mansion before which the carriage stopped; and Edgerton, alighting, informed the driver he could return to the hall, while he sauntered leisurely up through the long avenue leading to the house beneath freshly-budding trees and amid the perfume of early spring flowers.

The old porter touched his hat respectfully, as the young man bowed, smiled, and then moved slowly on to the inner court, where old Nero with a fierce growl arose from his noon-day nap, then came forward with a friendly recognition for one who had so often caressed him, and on receiving his salutation followed his friend with a satisfied look in his large dreamy eyes to the open door where Roger Burleigh stood ready to receive his visitor.

Why such a kind, noble, good-natured, wealthy and intelligent person as the proprietor of Burleigh House had never become a baron or a peer was past the comprehension of many of his friends. Yet those who knew him better declared that he was too indolent to make the necessary exertion to take a single step in advance of his present position, which, therefore, always remained the same, while he declared an undisputed fact when he asserted that he was too fond of his comfort and ease to walk deliberately into a lion's den; but should he ever be so unlucky as to be thrust there, he would do his best to fight his way out as soon as possible. And as he stood with both hands extended to receive his nephew, his large face expressing the intense joy that was in his heart, none could have doubted his entire indifference to all titled names, or the sincerity of his expressed satisfaction that Roger Burleigh had been left to enjoy himself in his own way.

"Well, now, this is kind in you," he exclaimed; "I was not expecting you for a week yet. Why, how well you are

looking! That last voyage was the thing for you, after all; and so lately crossed in love, too, my boy! Ha, ha, ha! Well, well, come in; you will find the ladies in the parlor. I was just going out to see my new horse. A capital fellow, Charles—the finest that money could buy. You know that is my weakness. Ha, ha, ha! Will you come and see him?”

Edgarton was about to follow his uncle, when little Floy came jumping and screaming along the passage upon discovering him, and in a moment more had bounded into his open arms, and was covering his face with kisses.

“Dear, dear cousin!” she softly whispered, as he placed her again upon the floor. “I guess mamma and my sisters are angry—dreadfully angry—with you, because you didn’t do or did do something. I don’t know exactly which it is, but I heard mamma say this morning that if you married that hateful girl you should never come here, and she would never speak to you. But you won’t care, will you? I wish I were big; then I would marry you, and everybody wouldn’t be getting angry with you—that I would!”

“What if I wouldn’t marry you, little bird? Then what? You see everybody thinks that I am stubborn and anxious to do what I please. Perhaps I wouldn’t love you.”

“But you do, cousin. Don’t you love me?” and the face of the little girl became overshadowed with grief, as the suspicious thought crossed her mind. But a repeated affirmation of his love drove it away, and the two entered the quaint old parlor where Mrs. Burleigh and her two elder daughters were sitting with a visitor.

Edgarton did not immediately recognize an old acquaintance in the gayly-dressed lady before him, who was sitting half buried in an elegant *fauteuil*; but upon hearing his name pronounced in a most languid, simpering tone, he turned, to perceive Miss Lena Edwards standing to receive his salutation. It was coldly given, for a rush of memories

came crowding upon his mind, and blotted out the transient gleams of affection which flitted across it.

A few friendly inquiries followed relative to his late visit to America, when Mrs. Burleigh remarked,

"Lady Anna informed me that your grand scheme of benevolence—or romance, as I apprehend—came to an end a few months since. How did it operate? Can a child of such low origin become in any degree elevated by education? I confess I have had many doubts concerning it, since I first heard of your folly, Sir Charles."

"Then dispel them, aunt, if you please, for I can answer you that I congratulate myself much upon the unlimited success of my experiment."

"No doubt," replied Miss Kate, the eldest daughter, with a look of hauteur upon her pretty face. "I can fully understand the cause of your self-congratulation, for Miss Lena informed us that the maid was considered very pretty, although everything about her bespoke her plebeianism and vulgarity. But I believe, Cousin Charles, you are not a close critic in those points, and as I learn admire the jetty curls and rosy lips of the little squaw, notwithstanding all these."

All joined in the low laugh that followed these remarks, while the young man himself smiled and endeavored to appear calm and unmoved, but there was a burning flush upon his cheek and an unsteady throbbing at his heart that convinced himself, at least, that the subject irritated him. He quietly answered, however,

"You mistake me, fair cousin, I am as great an admirer of grace and beauty as yourself, and as sensitively shrink from the contamination of vulgarism as my most ardent friends could desire."

Perhaps he spoke warmly, for little Floy bounded into his lap, and with her tiny arms about his neck said, softly,

"See, papa is coming up the avenue. He has been to

see my new horse. I want to call him Fairy, but he laughs at me. Isn't it a pretty name, cousin?"

"The prettiest you could find, birdie."

"Then come with me and tell him so. He will do anything you like, for he loves you so much;" and the little pleader kissed his cheek, and then, springing to the floor, said, "Come!"

"You are rude," exclaimed her sister, as they beheld her leading her captive cousin away.

In a short time Floy returned to the parlor with excuses to the ladies from Sir Charles, adding that he had gone to the library with her papa for a long talk.

The conference in the library continued until the dinner-bell rang through the long hall, and its cheerful sound broke in upon the confidential interview. As the two gentlemen entered the dining-hall, there was merriment beaming all over the face of the elder, while a subdued exultation glowed in the light blue eyes of his companion and answering smiles played about his lips. The ladies, however, were handed quietly to their seats with the same stiff reserve which had previously characterized their demeanor toward their "silly cousin," as the two young ladies had been pleased to call Sir Charles for many months, while Mrs. Burleigh, assuming more than her wonted acidity since the conversation in the parlor, took her accustomed seat without deigning to cast one glance at her companions' faces.

Servants tripped noiselessly about the room, while a low murmur of small-talk was kept up by the sisters and Miss Lena, in which none others engaged, and the dinner-hour bade fair to be an insufferably stupid one, when the old gentleman, deliberately laying down his knife and fork, leaned back in his chair, threw up his arms, and clasping his hands behind his head, broke forth in a loud, merry peal of laughter.

"Why, father! The lunatic asylum is undergoing re-

pairs, and the poor infuriates are huddled into uncomfortable quarters just now. Do, pray, hold on to your senses until the house is finished," exclaimed Jennie, the youngest daughter, joining in the laugh. But Mrs. Burleigh and Kate sat unmoved.

The outburst, however, changed the aspect of affairs in a measure, and Jennie continued,

"Do, father, tell us what amuses you. It is so stupid to laugh and not know what you are laughing at."

"Why, you laugh because your silly old father does. That is cause sufficient, isn't it, child?"

"Cousin Charles is laughing, too," suggested little Floy from her sly nook by her mother's side.

"Well, then," said the old gentleman, again dropping his knife and fork and leaning back in his chair, "let us make the good humor universal. What say you, Kate? Would you like one of the most splendid *fêtes* of the season?—eclipse, I mean, the Elliotts and the St. Clairs, and even your own last winter's entertainment. Eh, child?"

"Capital, capital!" exclaimed Jennie, clapping her hands in high glee.

"What has so changed your plans?" inquired Kate, while a blush of joyful surprise overspread her beautiful face; "you told me only a few weeks since—"

"Well, well, you don't want it, then. I thought to please my charming daughter by a grand display of the old man's wealth. But it is just as well," he continued, with a flourishing wave of the hand, and then quietly settled down to his dinner again.

"Oh, I didn't intend to say anything against it. Indeed, father, I should like it very much. I only wondered what it could be that had so suddenly changed your mind."

"Well argued, like a dutiful daughter, and I will tell you. Your cousin here has told me that a very talented American authoress is to be here in a few days on her tidal tour, accompanied by a few friends; and as he has

met her several times, we will supersede the Vincents and Ellises, and outdo their propensity for lionizing by a grand *éclat* of our own. Ha, ha! How would you like that?"

The cloud had disappeared from the family circle, and the "folly of Cousin Charles" was suddenly enveloped in the excitement of the hour. Many questions were asked of Edgerton and answered by him, he having remained silent during the conversation until applied to by Kate, who inquired,

"Is she pretty, Cousin Charles?"

"There are various opinions concerning the lady. I do not consider her beautiful, yet perhaps you would call her so."

When, however, they were informed that she was the authoress of "Thorny Way" and "The Discarded Daughter," and of "Lights and Shadows," which had just been announced by the press, their pleasure was unbounded, and nothing could be talked of during the evening but the coming festive scene.

Miss Lena, however, started, and a flush of surprise suffused her face. "Thorny Way!" It had reminded her brother of Lura—poor Lura. Was she indeed laboring for her daily bread, weak, worn and weary, while she herself was reveling in mirth and luxury? She had not inquired of her mother concerning her for some time, and the latter had ceased to trouble her with the contents of her sister's letters. In fact, she did not know that any had been received, as the name of the wayward sister was seldom mentioned. Then there arose before her, but for a moment only, the shipwreck, the broken vow and her own ingratitude. With a slight shiver of remorse, she drove back her dreary thoughts, and entered with renewed interest into the conversation about her.

On returning to the parlor, little Floy crept softly upon the knee of Edgerton and whispered in his ear, while her delicate arms encircled his neck,

"How bright your eyes are, cousin! And your cheeks are as red as when you read that letter in Edgarton Hall library. You look so pretty now, and Floy loves you so much."

Edgarton pressed the little creature to his heart, kissed her tenderly, called her "sweet fairy;" and as the glow deepened upon his cheek, the little head sank upon his bosom, and in a few moments the servant came and bore her sleeping to her chamber.

There were many changes in the stately old mansion during the ensuing two weeks; many hands were busy in the spacious library, which occupied the left wing and extended the entire length of the building; family pictures which had been long neglected were brought forth and hung upon the walls; old sofas were removed from their quiet nooks, and new ones took their places; the heavy curtains at the parlor windows were exchanged for costly lace; while brushing, dusting, painting and varnishing everywhere went on, until all things became new, and Burleigh House was transformed into a scene of elegance and wealth.

Sir Charles had been absent some days when Mr. Burleigh entered the parlor one evening, where his wife and daughters were sitting, and announced that the expected party had arrived in London, and that "Charles, the boy," would be with them on the morrow.

"And he has been to Liverpool to meet them? How strange! He must be very intimate with some one, if not with all, of the party," remarked Kate, who beamed with more than her wonted radiance in the pleasing prospect before her.

Lena Edwards had returned to the elegant residence of the Carringtons, where her mother was once more ensconced, after a succession of visits among her relatives and friends of former days, and a great struggle was going on between mother and daughter relative to the approaching *fête* at Burleigh House. An entire new costume must be procured

for that occasion. It would never do, according to Lena's repeated assertions, to appear in either of the dresses before worn. This was, in truth, no easy task to accomplish. Their limited purse was nearly empty, and many large bills had been contracted which it was impossible to pay; and Mrs. Edwards wept convulsively at the dismal outlook before her. Spring had come. The European tour was freely talked of by the family, and the haughty George Carrington had made no proposition for the hand of her daughter, nor did she see any prospect of his doing so. She had sacrificed her all to this one great purpose. What if it should fail? A return to America would be the only alternative left, and more than once she was forced to believe that this was expected of her at no very distant day. Even the summer residence of the family had often been the theme of conversation, and no invitation had been extended to them.

"Oh," she sobbed aloud, "that I were back in Pleasant Cottage once more! Poor Phelura! She is far happier than I, though she toils night and day for the food she eats."

"Perhaps you would like to have me join her in shirt-making?" interposed Lena, sneeringly. "But I have no such glowing desires, I can assure you, neither can I imagine how it is possible for us to find an asylum in our old home, which is no longer ours, if I understand the force of mortgages; and as six hundred a year would be no more forthcoming, after the fashion of the olden time, and there would be no manly hand to toil for us, I think we might as well look at the present and let the past sink into the shades unmolested. The fact is, mother, I must and will marry George Carrington, in spite of his aristocratic parents and sisters. I do not imagine this so hopeless an endeavor as you apparently do, neither would you despair had your incredulous eyes peeped in upon us this morning while in the conservatory. If Belle had not come stealing in, as she always does just when she is not wanted, I think I should have no trouble about the new silk which I must have."

The right chord had been touched, and none knew better than Lena how to play upon it.

"What did he say, child? Tell me all, that I may judge for myself if there be any hope. Oh, if you could but become his wife, I should not grudge Pleasant Cottage and the expenditure of our last farthing. But it is dreadful, child! Sometimes when alone I become almost deranged, thinking, thinking. I ought to have devoted that money which we have been spending and hunted for poor Edgar; I do not believe he was drowned. He must be alive. Perhaps he is suffering somewhere. Ever since the papers spoke of a ship bound to some foreign port having picked up a boat-load of suffering mariners, I have felt that he is alive;" and again the distressed mother wept unrestrainedly.

"You seem determined to make yourself miserable somehow," replied the daughter, but there was a pallor upon her cheek, and her voice was low and tremulous. "I do not remember any such statement; it was merely supposed that such was the case. Had he been alive, surely there has been sufficient time since that awful night to acquaint us with the fact, even though he had been taken to the south pole."

Both were silent; and there, in that spacious room, in the midst of luxury and wealth, painfully throbbed two hearts filled with remorse and self-condemnation.

Lena was the first to speak. She had an object to gain, and the advance already so confidently made must not be given up.

"Well, dear mother," she said, soothingly, "these are troublous times, but by and by you shall sail upon smooth waters. You have risked much for me, and I will do much for you. I was speaking about the *tête-à-tête* in the conservatory this morning. Have you forgotten that you wished to hear what the haughty bachelor said to me?"

Mrs. Edwards raised her head and looked with pleased interest at the speaker.

“You know I can’t give you his manner, which perhaps was more expressive than his words. But I was telling him of the American authoress whom we are to meet next week, and he inquired if she is beautiful. I replied that Cousin Charles, I believe, considered her so. ‘All Americans are peculiarly so,’ he rejoined, ‘and I shall be obliged to yield my impressible heart to one of them some day, as I am a wicked idolater at Beauty’s shrine.’ He was plucking a rose from a stem high above him at the moment; and as he handed it to me, his eyes spoke the language I had been longing to hear. Then he added, ‘I doubt much if the cheeks of the famous *blue* will at all vie with those of my pretty cousin this morning.’ Wasn’t it provoking that Belle should just then intrude herself upon us? I do believe she watches him, and understanding his preference, dares not leave us alone. But I am determined to outwit her. On that evening he shall propose. I declare it—he *shall* propose!”

The mother’s eyes kindled, and a smile of satisfaction for a moment played upon her features.

“He admired you much in the pink brocade at Lord Elliott’s, and I am sure you can find nothing more becoming.”

“Do you wish me labeled ‘*parvenu*,’ so that every beholder may read? No; I have worn that dress, pretty as you seem to think it, twice already; and rather than appear in it again, we will commence our proposed trip to America and shirt-making. By your own suggestion, I have no other suitable, and all that is left for us is to provide one or sink into obscurity.”

Mrs. Edwards groaned aloud. But the next moment the purse was opened, and a sufficient sum placed in Lena’s hand for the desired purchase.

“Not enough left to take us back to the pleasant home we have left,” sighed the mother, as she again closed it and placed it in its resting-place.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DISCLOSURE.

THE night for which so many hearts had palpitated with anxiety and pleasure at last arrived, and Burleigh house shone out amid the green foliage that surrounded it an illuminated scene of festive grandeur. There were many lights, too, skirting the long avenues, peeping into the shaded arbors or throwing their many-colored rays over the fresh young grass, and where the fragrant spring flowers were blooming, filling the evening air with odors and the joyous young heart with congenial gladness. The stars looked dreamily down, but the moon had not come to dim the brightness of the scene, and the happy, good-natured host walked with silent satisfaction up and down the spacious grounds, rubbing his hands in evident merriment, and now and then indulging in a low, muffled laugh which did not awaken the echoes or intrude itself upon the ear of any wandering listener. It was early yet, and the few who had come during the day were busily engaged in putting the last finishing touches upon their adornings.

Mrs. Edwards, restless and unhappy, had during the week ridden over to Edgarton Hall, where she had endeavored to buoy up her sinking spirits by confidentially communicating to Lady Anna the glorious anticipation of her daughter, and in return had been graciously entertained and invited to a seat in the carriage, in which, with Lady Anna, she had proceeded at an early hour to Burleigh house.

"I believe that I owe you much," said the stately lady during their ride, "and you may be sure of my lasting friendship and gratitude for your interference in that

foolish love affair of my son's. It would have been death to me to see him thus ignobly married. Indeed, the very thoughts of such a thing shock me beyond description."

"You may well rejoice," replied her companion, "and your avowal of friendship fully compensates me for all the risk I ran of losing your own and his affection in my earnest desire to benefit you both so much. She was an artful child, and somehow managed to insinuate herself into his affections, I never could tell how. To be sure, she has a pretty face enough, and there was something about her to excite one's sympathy; but when she disclosed her designs upon Edgerton, I felt how disgusting such a union would be, and determined more firmly than ever that he should be kept from committing himself until the infatuation wore off, although I more than half believed that he had already taken the fatal step, and subsequent letters proved my fears to be correct."

"You don't say that Charles Edgerton engaged to marry that Indian girl?"

"I do," was the firm, low answer.

"From what a depth of degradation you have saved us!" almost shrieked Lady Edgerton, as she clasped the hand of her companion. "I will never forget it. You shall be my friend, and I will be firmly and tenaciously yours. Lady Eveline has promised to endeavor to win back the truant lover, and I have no doubt she will succeed. A little strategy, you know, accomplishes so much with masculine hearts, and my son has a very foolish one, I confess; not at all like mine. Love, no doubt, is a fine affair, but it never can turn the balance against wealth and position. It is foolish to deny this, and a sickly sentimentality to adhere to such romance. At any rate, I was never more rejoiced than when he told me that she had returned to her own people. I will take good care that he never goes there after her."

This was a step in the right direction. Lady Edgerton

had sworn to be the firm friend of Mrs. Edwards, and the weary, troubled, remorseful heart felt happier and lighter than for many weeks before.

At an unusually early hour carriages rolled along the broad avenues, and brocades and laces brushed up the winding stairways and disappeared in gayly illuminated rooms above, for all were anxious to meet the talented American authoress who had succeeded so well in pleasing public taste on both sides of the Atlantic.

Lena Edwards was full of joyous anticipation, as George Carrington handed her into the carriage and seated himself beside her, in preference to taking the vacant seat by his sister, and during the short drive she was picturing to herself the dismay of the envious and her own defiant joy when she should stand before the world the affianced bride of George Carrington. She looked well; no one could imagine that thirty years and upward had passed over that fair face, so bright and blooming. Her new dress was very becoming, and the rich bertha that had half covered her full neck and well-rounded arms was of the costliest Honiton. As she had stood in the parlor waiting for the carriage, he too had told her that she looked charming. No wonder, then, that the wellnigh empty purse was forgotten and her mother's tears remembered only as an April shower.

Mrs. Edwards had taken a seat in the shade of a large bay-window that opened into the garden directly opposite to the door of the saloon at which the guests were announced, that she might obtain a good view of each without herself being an object of notice, as she said. Lady Anna flitted near her, chatting merrily with all around her, when she was arrested in her conversation with Lord Vincent by hearing the remark,

"She is certainly the most beautiful, winning creature my eyes ever luxuriated upon. If Sir Charles were not so unremitting in his attentions, I should own myself a victim to the wily god."

"Whom can they mean?" she thought. "And why have they coupled my son's name with this fascinating beauty?"

Mr. and Mrs. Fenn were announced, and a murmur near heralded the youthful bride, leaning upon the arm of a noble-looking gentleman, as "the American authoress." A suppressed scream reached her ear, and she turned to ascertain its cause, just in time to see Mrs. Edwards step hurriedly through the window upon the balcony, and then disappear from sight. She was about to follow, when Lord Elliott gently touched her arm, and slightly bowing, said, in a low tone,

"I do not wonder at the taste of Sir Charles; but pray inform us, Lady Edgerton, if the report be true, and your son has really secured the queen of beauty? Look!" and she raised her eyes, to see Flora Dupont and her father enter and receive the salutations of the host. "Isn't she superb? And her father must be a prince, for he has showered her with diamonds."

Mrs. Fenn for a time had been overlooked and quite forgotten in that crowded saloon by the dazzling light that had followed her, but in an elegant dressing-room above she was receiving an unexpected amount of attention.

Lura had not anticipated meeting either her mother or sister at this sumptuous entertainment, which she had been told was given in her honor, or she would have shrunk from exposing them to such a public exhibition of feeling as she well knew her presence would call forth. Much as they had wronged her, she had no desire then to subject them to open disgrace and shame. Edgerton, however, had disclosed to Flora the plot concerning herself, and she enjoyed in anticipation the surprise which she was conscious would be manifested on two faces present.

Lena was just descending the stairs, leaning upon the arm of George Carrington, when her mother met her with pallid lips and face of rigid cast, and motioned her to turn and follow her.

"Pardon me," she exclaimed, withdrawing her arm from that of her companion; "I fear that my mother is ill. Pass on to the door, and I will follow in a few moments if my fears are groundless," she added, as she retraced her steps and again entered the room which she had just left. There sat her mother, motionless and pale as though her blood had frozen and all power of speech had left her for ever.

"Tell me, for the love of life, what is it that excites you so much? Speak, if you wish me to remain here, for I must go. Mr. Carrington is awaiting me at the foot of the stairway."

"No, no, not there! Do not go there, Lena, or you will return as powerless as you now behold me. Let us fly from the house, from London, from the world—I care not whither, only from here."

Lena trembled. She had never seen her mother thus agitated before, and the sight overwhelmed her. Falling upon her knees before the statue-like figure, she begged her to reveal the cause of her distress.

"Phelura, the child we have abused, neglected, scorned, is below, the talented American authoress, the wife of Lewis Fenn, while we are here poor, dependent, hell-deserving mortals!"

"Fury the wife of Lewis Fenn! You rave! It is not so!" and clasping her hands, she groaned aloud. "Your eyes must have become dim. How did you know her? Say, at least, that you may be mistaken."

"Not know my child? It was she—my heart was not deceived."

"And Lewis Fenn, he to whom my heart clung with a tenacious affection which nothing could sever—he is lost to me for ever. Shame on a work that has such a contemptible ending! You promised me George Carrington—told me he was within my power, and that all that was necessary to such a glorious achievement lay within myself. False, false deceiver: He too is lost, and my heart be-

comes stone within. You brought me to this, unnatural mother that you are!" she almost shrieked, as, rising, she rapidly paced the floor. "You taught me to despise my sister by making her my slave. You have fed my vanity, fostered my foolish hopes, until now, and we are ruined—ruined! A terrible demon is within my heart. I could almost throttle you—yes, you, my parent!"

"My child, my child, you are mad! Compose yourself, or a worse calamity than all will befall you."

"I compose myself? Where are the alluring riches which you have held out to me? This night George Carington and his proud mother and sister will learn our disgrace from her lips, and the finale will be expulsion from their house. Where shall we go? All of our little fortune is swallowed up in the foolish delusion of this one hour, in a design which I should never have found strength to carry into execution had it not been for your counsel and advice. Beggars! How does that sound to you? Ha, ha! Perhaps *she* will bestow a small pittance from her abundance, just to keep us from starving. Yet she is foolish if she does. We did not offer her anything when we cruelly drove her from our door, and compelled her to toil for her bread. No, no! And Lewis Fenn pitied and married her! Ha, ha! I would be willing to starve for a while to receive such a recompense."

"Oh, do not blame me, my child. It was for your good that I loved you more than all the rest. You were my first born, Lena, my idol."

"No, no! It was not love, but the life-throes of your selfish heart. You thought to regain your lost social position by my beauty. You have deceived yourself, and brought ruin upon us all. No, no, not all! The being whom our heartlessness sought to crush has risen far above us, to mock us and laugh at our calamity."

The paroxysm was over, and the proud Lena sank into a chair and moaned aloud, while the hot tears trickled fast

through her icy fingers down upon the pearly silk and costly lace with which two hours before she had adorned herself with a heart full of hope and pleasing excitement. Both were silent, when the door suddenly opened, and George Carrington stood before them. He had descended the stairs, as Lena had commanded upon leaving him so suddenly; but fearing she might need some assistance if her mother was really ill, he had ascended again, and reached the door just as the disclosure was made. The door was ajar, and the conversation from within fell with distinctness upon his ear. Could it be true? Was the child whom he well remembered, but whom he had supposed dead, since he had never heard her spoken of by either Lena or her mother—was she the talented Mrs. Fenn, upon whom so much honor had been bestowed? He stood spellbound, listening to the recital of the guilt of the fair creature whom he had more than once flattered himself he could love, until he heard from her own lips the plot long matured for ensnaring him. He blessed the fate which had sent him thither and saved him from a lifelong mortification and repentance. Still, he pitied them; and when the sobs of the broken-hearted girl reached him, he had resolved upon a plan of action, and without any hesitation he pushed open the door and intruded himself upon their grief. Both looked wildly at him, as he approached, but neither of them spoke.

“Shall I call the carriage and send you to our home?” he inquired, mildly.

“No, not to your home—to Edgerton Hall. Send us to Edgerton Hall. Lady Anna is my friend; she will pity me,” exclaimed Mrs. Edwards, passionately.

“As you will. In five minutes come down the back stairway; I will be there to assist you.”

He left the room, and without a word Lena and her mother prepared to obey the command.

“No, I must see her—him—once,” exclaimed Lena; and

throwing her mantle down, she hurriedly left the room. To descend the stairs and cross the long hall was but the work of a moment; and all were too intently listening, with eyes fixed upon the door of the music-room, whence issued the most melodious voice which they had ever heard, to notice the pale, haggard face that flitted by or peered longingly in, then passed to the opposite door, where a group had gathered around the star of the evening, hanging upon her words, as she talked to them of other lands. Shinking in the shade of the doorway, Lena, too, stood listening.

"Charmingly performed," exclaimed a gentleman, as the voice of the singer died away.

"She is an old friend of yours, Mrs. Fenn, I believe?" remarked another.

"She has for a long time been very dear to me."

The crowd parted, and Lena beheld Flora Hawes approaching, leaning upon the arm of Charles Edgerton. It could be no other. Although she was dressed in the costliest robes and sparkled with diamonds, yet that smile, that face and those deep liquid eyes could belong to no other. She approached, and Lura, rising, pronounced her name. It was Flora. With a bloodless hand pressed tightly over her lips, lest her pent-up agony should become audible and her presence be discovered, Lena flew back to her room and fell prostrate upon the floor.

Carrington was beside her. He had returned, after waiting impatiently by the carriage for ten minutes, to hasten their exit.

"She has fainted," he said, calmly. "Bring her mantle and hood, and follow me."

Mrs. Edwards obeyed without a word, and the strong man bore the insensible girl in his arms along the winding passage, down the narrow stairs and out into the open air. Having laid her upon the velvet cushions of his carriage, he returned to the house for water and a glass of wine. His

efforts at restoration were successful, and in a few minutes the carriage was rolling rapidly away toward Edgarton Hall, bearing two wretched beings, silent in their despair.

George Carrington re-entered the drawing-room a half-hour after with a mingled feeling of pain and gladness, yet inwardly relieved that Lena Edwards was not present, and that once more he felt heart-free, willing to be pleased or charmed, as the case might be.

Edgarton was standing near him, conversing carelessly with his mother and Lady Eveline.

"I do not think you use us fairly," remarked the last mentioned, as the young man was hurrying away. "Almost every one else in the room has been presented to that peerless beauty, and you have not as yet granted us that honor."

"I did not know that you wished it," was the cold reply. "But see, she is alone now, with the exception of that coxcomb, Leroy, who I am sure will flee at our approach. Come; I will no longer be pronounced a delinquent in civilities to my dearest friends;" and handing his mother over to his friend Carrington, the four proceeded, with many interruptions, toward the bay-window where Flora was evidently endeavoring to shield herself from the gaze of the many eyes fixed upon her. She smiled, however, as she saw Edgarton approaching, and her dark eyes beamed with pleasure as she watched his coming.

He hesitated for a moment, and a slight tremor passed through his frame as he said,

"This is Flora Hawes, the wild Indian girl of Mackinaw, now Miss Dupont. Mother," he continued, in a low voice, "my *protégée*; can you receive her as your daughter? Shall she be mine?"

A little jeweled hand was extended first to Lady Eveline, then to the proud, dark-eyed woman whom she knew to be Edgarton's mother, and toward whom for his sake her heart

yearned with kindling affection. The haughty lady clasped it in her own and pressed it tenderly, while Lady Eveline took the arm of a gentleman standing near who turned to speak to her, and walked away. There was anger in her heart which she did not endeavor to conceal.

"He has deceived us," she thought, and her heart throbbed convulsively, as she looked upon her rival. "It is all over, then. She loves him; and she has in her possession the heart I fondly hoped to win back to myself. Peerless beauty! I do not blame him. Yet how we have all been deceived! She is no plebeian—no Indian girl;" and with her companion she passed out upon the lawn, and sauntered moodily and almost silently beneath the shadows of the huge old trees, looking up to the mild-eyed stars and down upon the early spring flowers, until the cool air had calmed her throbbing brow and brought back the color to her cheek and lips.

"You are better now," said her companion; "I feared you were ill."

"Yes, better," she replied, impatiently. "Let us return to the house."

Lady Edgerton held the little hand tightly in her own for a long time, while her thoughts ran rapidly back over the last few months. She had not heard the strange story of Flora Dupont's real parentage, and, after all, it mattered but little. Her appearance bespoke wealth abundant—wealth from some source; and if it were indeed true that Indian blood really coursed in her veins, she would be none the less the proud queen of beauty, peerless as she now appeared.

Flora tenderly twined her disengaged arm around the erect figure beside her, and whispered,

"I think we shall love each other very much."

"Very much," echoed Edgerton, close to her elbow. "Shall it not be so, mother?"

They were interrupted, and he heard no reply to his

question, as Mr. Dupont approached to claim his daughter for a walk in the conservatory.

"Her father is a noble-looking gentleman," remarked Lady Edgerton to her son, as the two walked away.

"Fine-looking, but of low propensities, you would say, for he married a poor girl much inferior to him in wealth and position, and thereby offended his friends. But she died when Flora was very young, and ever since he has remained true to the love he bore her."

There was a little wickedness in the heart of Edgerton, as he said this—a feeling of triumph, of satisfaction, as he beheld the chagrin of his only parent; but when she inquired tenderly, "Surely she was not a—" his heart softened, and he answered, unhesitatingly,

"No, no, dear mother. There is no Indian blood in her veins—there is only that which is as pure as any coursing through your own. You shall hear her story to-morrow, if you will invite them to our house. You know I promised to await your permission to bring her. I think I have, and feel amply repaid for my patience."

"Yes, Charles, she is worthy of you, and I am sure I shall bless you for such a daughter."

There spoke the true heart. Much that was good and noble was there, but self-interest had covered it, and disappointments had interposed a barrier to the secret chamber in which her better nature lay concealed. Maternal love, however, had conquered all unworthy impulses, and given that better nature full sway.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

THERE was a lengthy conversation the following morning in Lady Edgerton's private parlor between herself and son, the conclusion of which was that Mr. and Mrs. Fenn should be informed of the condition of Mrs. Edwards and Lena, that some arrangements might be consummated for their leaving London and vicinity as soon as possible, since no one could now feel honored by having them remain, and they certainly could experience no pleasure in prolonging a visit which could only be fraught with pain for them.

A message was therefore immediately despatched, and late in the afternoon the newly-wedded pair arrived. Lura looked more charming in the rich riding-dress she wore than she did the evening before in a robe of white satin, enveloped in a costly gossamer lace—at least in the eyes of her devoted husband; for she was a demure little body, and a sober, quiet costume best became her. There were traces of tears upon her cheek and a hesitating languor in her usually buoyant step that betokened a heavy heart.

"Let me enter alone," she murmured, as they reached the door of an upper chamber, in which Lady Edgerton had informed her that the unhappy pair could be found. "When I wish you, Lewis, will you come at my call?"

Lura stepped within the room, and the words "Mother!" "Sister!" fell from her tremulous lips like softest music. Neither turned to look upon her, but the head of the mother drooped lower, as it rested upon her hand, and a stifled groan broke the stillness which followed.

“Mother, dear mother, will you not look upon your child? Will you not forget the hateful past, and take me to that bosom on which, twenty-three years ago to-day, my infant head was first pillowed? Speak to me! Only say that you will be our mother, Lewis’s and mine, and I will be content.”

A little hand lay trembling upon the shoulder of the broken-hearted mother while these words were uttered; then its owner stooped and impressed a burning kiss upon the hot, wrinkled brow before her. With a scream of delight the long arms were extended, and Lura once more lay weeping upon the maternal bosom. The wrongs of years were forgotten; the snow and ice which hatred and revenge had left chilling upon the footprints of Time all melted away in that fond embrace, and the glorious sunshine of reconciliation chased away every lingering shadow, and left everything brighter than it had been for many days.

Lena had arisen, and turning her back upon the affecting scene, looked out upon the beautiful garden, motionless and still.

“Sister, will you not turn, that I may look into your face and read my doom? He has no sister, and I have only you. Will you not love us? Will you not be *our* sister?”

Apparently, Lena did not hear these kind, gentle words, for she moved not, and her face still retained the rigid pallor of death.

Lura was frightened. Again she spoke:

“The chain, Lena, with which he bound that crooked branch to yours on that Christmas eve—shall we sever it?”

With a sudden start the statue turned and with burning eyes looked intently into the face of the patient pleader by her side.

“He loved you then!” she sighed. “Here! take it;” and drawing from her bosom the fragile chain, she threw it upon the floor at her feet. “My life has been a cheat, all of it, even this detested love. Go! I will not be mocked. Love

you? I tell you you shall not touch me! I hate you, hate her, hate everybody!" and pointing her jeweled finger to the crouching form of her mother, who sat half buried in a cushioned chair, she turned again to the window.

For a moment only, the old fire blazed up in the deep gray eyes of Lura, but a single glance at the bent form of her mother quenched the burning flame; and stepping to the door, she called her husband.

"Our mother, Lewis," she said, in a low tone; and he advanced, clasped the wrinkled hand in his own and kissed her cold cheek.

"Our mother," he replied. "And Lena; will she be our sister?"

He walked toward her, but with an impatient gesture she motioned him away. He obeyed, and turning again to Mrs. Edwards, seated himself beside her.

"I am very miserable," sobbed the mother, hysterically "My life has been a mockery, and now at the last all my hopes are shipwrecked and I am lost."

"Oh no," interposed Mr. Fenn, pleasantly. "We will find new hopes, new joys. Let the old ones go. They were shipwrecked because not worth saving. There is a Hand that will guide our hopes if they are pure. Is it not so Lura? You shall find such as are worthy of your declining years, and you shall yet be happy."

"Not happy. You know not how miserable I am—how dark my future."

"Let me see if I cannot brighten it. There is a beautiful little cottage in a distant city on the other side of the Atlantic. Nearly six months ago it was sold to foreclose a mortgage. I bought it; and as it needed some repairs, I took great pleasure in attending to them, and it is now one of the loveliest homes in the beautiful city of T—. Peace and contentment reign throughout its newly-furnished rooms, and happiness fills every apartment. Return thither, and

find it. It is your home, and in it you shall need no good thing."

The poor woman made no reply, but sob after sob filled the room and fell with mournful cadence upon the hearts of two present. The statue at the window moved not, and Mr. Fenn continued:

"Now for the purest joy of all. There is one over the water awaiting you. Your future is not dark, my mother, for a dearer son than I can ever hope to be waits to bless you with his love. Edgar lives."

"O God!" she cried, with upraised hands, "this is more joy than my poor sinful heart can bear. I do not deserve it. Oh for the power to praise thee! The dead is alive. The lost is found;" and overcome with excitement, she sank down, her head pillowed upon the bosom of him who had so magically driven away her gloom and flooded her future with an overpowering radiance.

Lena now turned her face from the window and stood gazing upon the scene steadily, while Lura applied restoratives to the fainting woman. Then they placed her upon the sofa, and Mr. Fenn, turning toward the silent statue, said, mildly but firmly,

"Lena, a vessel will sail next week from Liverpool to New York. I wish you and your mother here to be in readiness to sail in it. If I can assist you in any way, Lura will let me know."

"Oh yes, let us go," Mrs. Edwards sighed, feebly—"let us go. I want to see my poor boy, my Edgar. I thought he was dead. How did he get to America?"

In a few words Lura told the story of his rescue, his long sickness, his insanity, the great kindness of Edgerton, and finally his slow but sure restoration to health and reason.

"He is still at the asylum," she continued, "but will be ready on your return to accompany you to Pleasant Cottage, where I hope to find you all on my return from my European tour, happy and peaceful."

"You are to travel, are you? And I am to be sent back to dependence and drudgery?" sneered Lena through her half-closed teeth.

Mr. Fenn fixed his large dark eyes upon her strong features:

"You will not leave your mother, Lena, while your presence can add to her enjoyment. We will return to-morrow, and I hope by the next day we can accompany you to Liverpool and make arrangements for your speedy departure."

Then kissing Mrs. Edwards and telling Lura he would call for her when the carriage was ready, he left the room.

"Mother, Flora and her father are with us at the hotel. Would you like to see her?"

"Flora? Her father? What do you mean, child?"

A bitter smile played on the face of Lena, but neither noticed it.

"Yes, Flora. Has no one told you of her new fortune?"

"No one."

"I forgot. No one knew of it but Edgarton, and I presume he had reasons of his own for not divulging his happy secret. He wished to surprise his proud mother, which he did most effectually last evening."

"She has met her, then? Oh, miserable woman that I am! How I long to be away!"

"She will never add to your grief by any allusion to past events. Believe it, she loves me too well, and is too good and noble in herself. Shall I tell you her story? We may not have time to-morrow. Besides, she is expected here, and I know will want to see you."

She received no answer, but in the same sweet voice went on to relate the second strange story, which brought wonder and amazement to the hearts of her listeners.

"And she is to marry Edgarton in spite of all I have done?" groaned Mrs. Edwards.

Lura did not appear to notice this remark, but answered, mildly,

"Yes; Edgerton is to accompany us in our travels, and I think will insist upon the wedding before we start. Our company will also receive the addition of George Carrington and sisters. I anticipate much enjoyment, but shall often think of the dear ones at Pleasant Cottage, and many others left behind."

The carriage was announced, and Lura, kissing her mother tenderly, rose to depart. Lena again turned her face to the window; and with a look full of sorrow, Lura left the room.

The departure of Mrs. Edwards and Lena was hastened, and in less than a week they were comfortably on board the vessel, Mr. and Mrs. Fenn having accompanied them to their place of departure. Lena had continued her frigidity until she felt the bosom of the great waters swelling and rolling beneath her, when the thoughts of that terrible night came dashing against the icy barriers of her soul, and they gave way.

"My oath, oh, my oath!" she exclaimed. "How have I kept it! The great Ruler of the mighty deep will destroy me, and I shall sink—sink for ever."

"Are you afraid to cross the ocean?" asked Lura, compassionately.

"No. Lena Edwards was never afraid of anything beneath her feet, but was troubled and harassed by an overshadowing power. No, I am not afraid," she continued, "of anything but my own heart. You, however, will not allow one thought of me to trouble you in your moments of pleasure. I am not worth your thoughts, much less the sacrifice of a single comfort. You have sailed triumphantly over all my expectations. Let that console you for the loss of a sister who has never been a blessing to you, and take the place which such a relationship should have occupied. Good-bye;" and without another word, she passed into her state-room and locked the door.

In another hour the proud steamer commenced her long,

uncertain journey over the trackless, fathomless deep, while Mr. Fenn and Lura returned to London, where all outwardly was gayety and mirth. At least, there were a few happy hearts.

Mr. Dupont had at last consented to a speedy marriage between Sir Charles Edgerton and his beautiful daughter, and all were in blissful expectancy of the splendid wedding which was to take place in two weeks at Edgerton Hall. Lady Anna, too, was to accompany the bridal party to Paris, and thence to Italy, where she was to remain until their return.

This was as far as anticipation extended, but strange things were wrapped up in the unknown years, to be developed only as unfolded day by day. Still, the reader need not be astonished to learn that in less than two years after, when the minds of our little party had become sated with sightseeing and their bodies wearied with travel, there was yet another wedding at Edgerton Hall, when Lady Anna became the untitled Mrs. Dupont, and accompanied her husband and son to Montreal for an unlimited sojourn.

The dear old father was still alive, and had been well cared for by Dora, who afterward became a great favorite with the proud English lady, and a needful accompaniment, as her mother had been, for more than one petted flower laid upon her bosom to be tenderly nursed. Her trust was never betrayed, and Flora's babes were safe in her care, for no great temptation came to throw its dark shadows across her path and cause her feet to stray.

One bright spring morning, when the little Arthur lay sleeping in his curtained crib, his happy mother brooding over and kissing the little velvety cheek and pouring endearing appellations into his unconscious ear, Mrs. Dupont entered and brought a joyous surprise. Their expected guests, Mr. and Mrs. Fenn, had arrived and brought with them Mrs. Lane. What a happy meeting was in store

for her! And in a few moments the two friends were clasped in a long, fond embrace.

"How are those dear eyes?" asked Flora, as soon as she could speak.

The smile on the happy face answered her more emphatically than the simple words,

"The same as when you saw them."

Mr Lane was to follow in a few days, and a happy party filled the old stone mansion at Montreal, and the aged grandsire looked on and smiled. Late in the evening Flora said to Lura,

"You have not told me of yourself and our friends at Pleasant Cottage. It seems but a year since our return to America, yet many changes can be effected in that time. I hope no sad ones have visited you?"

"I am very happy, dear Flora, and my home compensates me for my early life of discomfort. But poor Lena! she is miserable, with a fixed determination to remain so. We strive to make her happy, but her disappointments were great, and she will not look upon the silver lining of the cloud. Our mother spent the winter with us, and seems quite happy, and we enjoy her presence with us very much. Edgar lives at Pleasant Cottage with Lena, busily engaged in his store, which is all his own; and at our parting, a few days since, he whispered in my ear that I must return that way if I wished to see him married. You cannot think, dear Flora, whom I am to have for a sister. None other, as he informed me, than your old pupil Mattie Goodale. They have become very much reduced in circumstances, and Kate is the bosom companion of Lena. I do not think this confidential relation does my unfortunate sister any good, since they contrive to keep their discontent in full blaze by continually fanning it. There have been many strange changes in my life, Flora, but none, I ween, are stranger than those found in our past histories. I have just woven them to-

gether, your life and mine. May I call the story 'Fury and the Island Beauty'?"

"For shame, fair authoress!" exclaimed Flora, with merriest little rippling laugh imaginable. "How dare you?"

"The crooked, unsightly branch of such an illustrious tree," chimed in Mr. Fenn, as the laugh became general.

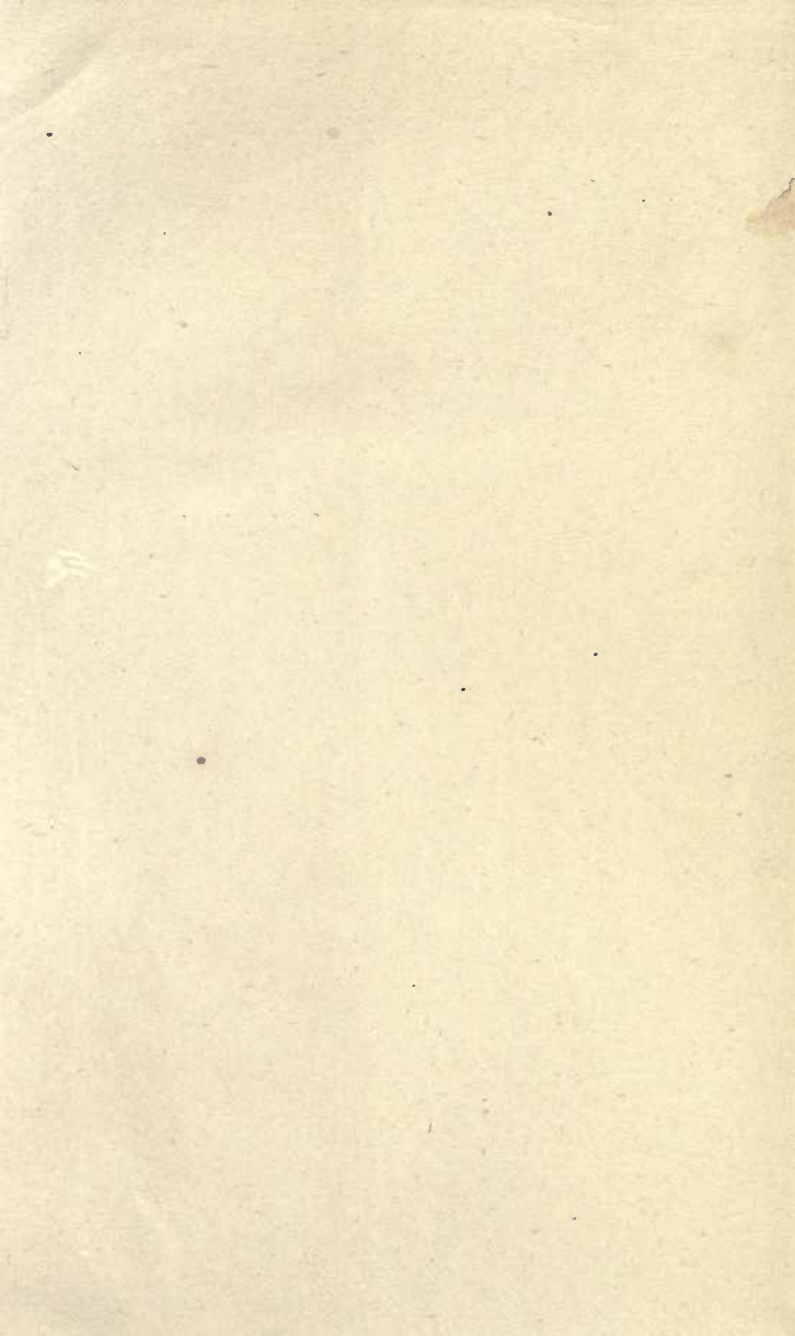
"But, fair cousin," said Sir Charles, a moment after, "for once you must own that Love has wrought a miracle of change."

"Most noble Festus!" exclaimed Lura, stopping in her promenade up and down the spacious parlors and standing before her cousin, "you must not give all the glory to the fickle god to whom you owe so much; for although my heart desires to give him due homage, I tell you truly there is nothing so damaging to the complexion as *starvation*. Oh, how I hated everything that would not give me food! It is the feeding and satisfying of these once famished powers that has taken the unsightliness from this plain face;" then crossing the room she took the cooing, laughing baby from its mother's arms, and raising it high above her head, exclaimed,

"May never a shadow of that bony hand fall upon these beautiful features to mar their sweetness and wring the sunshine out of its very soul."

"Amen!" ejaculated Sir Charles; and the tea-bell chiming in its merry response, the happy party, laughing and chatting, wended their way to the long dining-hall, where we will take leave of them, feeling sure that at no distant day we shall meet them again.







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